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Thomas Srampickal

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Business Ethics

Edited by

Thomas Srampickal

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Editorial

Interest in and concern for the Morality or Ethics of Business is not a new phenomenon. The ancient understanding that the practice of usury was unfair is indicative of this. Such concerns have always been there in the human community, though study, discussion and publication of it in the academic world and professional circles have not been very pronounced or frequent.

However, with the burgeoning of the concept, practice and operation of business in recent times the scenario has changed. The emergence of liberalization, privatization and globalization, the prevalence of consumerism and the dominance of the mass media have also contributed both to boosting of business operations and to better awareness and experience of the advantages and disadvantages, good and bad, fair and unfair, etc., in the various spheres and dimensions of business. This seems to have woken up the dormant discipline of Business Ethics and pressed it into action. Consequently, ethics has become an important topic in the syllabus for business/management education, several new Business Ethics journals have been launched and discussion of ethical issues has become more common in business circles.

Some people prefer to call the discipline Management Ethics or Managerial Ethics rather than Business Ethics because this latter term, though more traditional, is thought to be very restrictive denoting only profit-oriented concerns while Management is a broader term covering also activities and enterprises not necessarily oriented to profit-making. Here however we use the more traditional term, Business Ethics, without necessarily intending to be restrictive.

Though the above said increased concern about Business Ethics is primarily true of the West, the Indian business world and business education have also been evincing concern and interest in business ethics in recent times as indicated by certain pioneering studies

and research. Besides other studies, a few years ago S.K.Chakraborty, probably the most respected business ethicist in India today, made a study involving 2000 Indian managers, dividing them according to their traits into four types, namely, (1) values weak, skills weak, (2) values strong, skills strong, (3) skills weak, values strong, and (4) values weak, skills strong. He found that most Indian managers (in fact. more than 70 percent of his sample) belonged to the ' values weak, skills strong' category (cfr. Sadri and others, *The theory and practice of managerial ethics*, p.xxiii). This is not due to the fault of managers alone, but of the whole system, including lack of training in value-based management.

This issue of *Jeevadhara* is an attempt to introduce the emerging discipline of Business Ethics to its readers, especially non-specialists. The first article, by this author, briefly clarifies in its first part the notions of Business and Ethics and their interrelationship. The second part of the same article exposes in a non-technical way the important ethical theories which often serve as the bases for various business ethical approaches. Then Paul Fernandes S.J. professor of Business Ethics at Xavier Labour Relations Institute, Jamshedpur, being well aware of the importance of ethics in business, deals with the present status of Ethics in business education. Cyriac Kottayarikil S.J.. long time professor of Business Ethics at XLRI, discusses the Catholic Contribution to Business Ethics. He also gives a more concrete picture of Business Ethics course in Management Training Programmes by sharing some of the actual questions, concerns, difficulties and suggestions regarding the conduct of such a course. Lastly, John Chethimattam C.M.I., writes about the Ethical Challenges in Business praxis today, where in he speaks of the Crisis in Economics and the ethical challenges. The strange phenomenon today is that both capitalists and communists want to keep the poor in their present poverty. So only the will of the people developed through correct political consciousness can build a community of adult citizens. This attempt, we hope, will contribute at least in a small measure towards fostering a keener awareness about the priority of value-based management.

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Thomas Srampickal

Business Ethics and Ethical Theories

Thomas Srampickal

These are introductory thoughts about the relationship between Business and Ethics. Though business might appear to be unconcerned about ethics, it has to be, like any other human enterprise, an ethical one. Business education, policy making and general business ethos are all important for this. What is needed is not just 'codes' but permeation of business operations and policies by genuine ethical values and virtues. Approaches of Business Ethics are inspired and guided by one or some of the major ethical theories. This article is a brief presentation of the major approaches in Ethics today. Teleology, Utilitarianism, Situationism, Deontology, Three-font-theory and Proportionalism are presented and briefly commented upon. The author is professor of Theology at St. Thomas Apostolic Seminary, Kottayam - 686010, Kerala, India.

Introduction

Some people may feel uncomfortable about the idea of putting Business and Ethics together. They might wonder how these strange bed-fellows could collaborate smoothly or even coexist. After all, business means business, that is, profit-making while ethics means promotion of what is good and right. It is said that "good medicine is good morals", that is, a judicious application of medicine, which by its nature aims at the improvement/restoration of health, is also morally sound medicine, because it is oriented to and supposed to function for the good of the individual treated. But can we parallelly say that 'good business is good morals'. Here the very purpose and orientation of business seems to block the entry of ethics into it because business is concerned with promoting profits, where concern for what is right, fair, good, etc., may only forestall, cut down or block profit-making. Business is "the development and processing of economic values in society" and "Businessman's function is skilfully to maximize economic values"¹. A key difference between a business and a profession is often said to lie in the fact

1. Cfr. E. Stevens, *Business Ethics*, 1979, pp. 3, 4.

that a profession is oriented to common good where profit is incidental while a business is oriented to profit where common good is incidental. Consequently, introducing morals into the process of making business decisions can be stamped as unnecessary external interference into the autonomy of business and the normal flourishing of economic values.

Despite the appeal of the above argument, critical reflection shows that business cannot be divorced from ethical values. Man is basically a moral being and he cannot simply ignore or be indifferent to the call of the good - the call to do good and avoid evil as far as he can. This moral imperative affects all his freely made plans, choices and actions, and therefore also his economic and business decisions. Therefore, though business by its natural thrust is profit-oriented, as a human enterprise it has to be ethical.

Part I . Business Ethics

In fact, the relationship between business and ethics has been at least implicitly acknowledged from very old times as it is evident from the ethical discussions of Aristotle, the Old Testament prohibition of usury, grappling with the issues of justice and honesty found in several ancient philosophies and religious teachings. The importance of ethics in business was felt more conspicuously and its role became clearer in the context of the Industrial Revolution of millions of people, affecting their fortunes and shaping their destinies. The range of business is widening day by day, the number of business professionals multiplying and that of business schools increasing. Business today has acquired global stature, multinational features, corporate structure and liberally privatized goals. These generate an atmosphere conducive to all out business, business no holds barred, business geared solely to profit. Stock market scams, collapse of financial institutions, flow of substandard and toxic drugs to the poor nations, unabated environmental pollution, the politics-business-underworld nexus, etc., are outstanding examples of this.

The labelling of the 1980s as the "decade of greed" seems to point to the true nature of the malaise even while the 1990s have not

shown symptoms warranting a more benign nomenclature. The advice and warning of J R D Tata, the doyen of the Indian business world, given a few years before his death, is very pertinent in this context. "There is indeed a need to rekindle old principles and ethical values which, alas, have too often been ignored or neglected in recent years in the belief that quicker profits and greater accumulation of wealth will be the result"². Tata's words highlight and warn against the business tendency to waive ethical norms and principles for accelerating and amassing profits. Of course, often businessmen put on an ethical facade knowing well that appearing to be ethical is advantageous to their own cause- yes, good morals is good business! Hence they often vie with each other to project themselves as self-less and dedicated to the public and their products as the best suited for all purposes and on all occasions. A glance at the advertisement industry is proof enough for this. This is not ethics but a caricature of it. It is self-promotion and duplicity masquerading as altruism and morality.

We quote just two cases; one of 'moral facade' and the other of genuine moral sense to illustrate our point and believe they will be instructive. An Indian businessman in West Africa allegedly bought out a ship full of beer declared unfit for human consumption by the Spanish Government. He then got a local priest (which doctor) to bless the beer, and an Indian (medical) doctor to declare it safe for consumption in "small quantities", and went ahead to market it³. Pirojsha, the early CEO of Godrej, heard from a customer that something was oozing from the inside of his safe supplied by Godrej. The CEO had reason to suspect that the moisture-generating and fire-resisting compound supplied by a manufacturer of international repute was faulty since water should generate only during a fire. The defect could be and was rectified, but only by getting back not only that particular safe, but hundreds of others from all over the country, on his own initiative, completely changing the composition, and carefully packing and returning the safes to their delighted

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2. S. Sadri, D. S. Dastoor, S. Jayashree, *The Theory and Practice of Managerial Ethics*, 1999, p.9
 3. *Ibidem*, p. 46

owners -- all involving heavy unexpected expenditure through no direct fault of Godrej - and at a time when he was struggling to put Godrej on a thorough footing⁴. This second example shows that a business can survive and flourish without its being corrupt for that.

Being aware that business enterprises are complex and many factors are relevant for its assessment from different perspectives, we briefly discuss certain points that seem to be important for a healthy integration of business and ethics.

1. Good men in business, not just good businessmen

Human societal life almost inevitably supposes at least some business activity to produce certain essential goods like food items, medicines, etc., and service them. In fact, business thrives largely on human needs. As humans progress and life becomes more complex, needs multiply and get sophisticated. While the primitive human was satisfied with meeting his basic physiological needs, his modern counterpart has a plethora of needs. For many today, for example, status maintenance is as important a need as stilling hunger. As we know, creating ever new needs in the minds of people and psychologically pressurizing them to get the needs satisfied has itself become a big business today. And business enterprises of various hues and colours emerge to cater to the ever-rising and innumerable needs and wants of different categories of people. Simultaneously, business also creates employment for job seekers, opportunities for workers and professionals to prove and utilize their skills and talents, occasions for many people to work together and associate and contribute to the economic progress as well as the overall well being of the community, all of which are not only individual needs but also societal needs of considerable weight.

Businesses are maintained and promoted not only by the needs and interests of those at the receiving end, but very much also by those of the entrepreneurs themselves. The satisfaction of their various needs also depends on the success of their business. In fact, the money, talents, reputation and even the future of many

4. *Ibidem*, p.xxiv

entrepreneurs might be at stake in their businesses. Therefore, it is natural that every businessman tries his best to make his business a success of which the final yard stick is the net profit. Successful executives are expected to manage money, material and men effectively and efficiently for attaining their goals and objectives. This is best applied to business management where the goal and focus is profit. Since business is thus very closely bound up with the need satisfactions and vital interests of all involved, there is a natural tendency for all, particularly for those who have greater stakes in, and better control over, it to make the best out of it.

However, in the preoccupation to make profit and more of it, business should not forget or ignore certain principles which always need to be respected and abided by. It is here that ethical consideration of business becomes imperative. Business is not just for money and material but for people. Even its dealing with money and material very much affects human persons and their well being. No doubt, it is this human-centredness of the by-nature-profit-oriented business that makes it necessarily an ethical affair. In other words, how production and services go is business, how people go is ethics. Business affects various categories of people for different reasons: Employees-employers, consumers, competitors and the wider public. How employees are treated by the management and how they fare and vice-versa, how the goods and services produced suit the needs of the consumers and affect their well-being, how business rivals are dealt with and how possible public damages like environmental pollution, etc., are managed, are all major business ethics issues.

In all these and similar issues, all concerned have to be guided by principles of justice and fairness. While trying to make profit or gain advantage everybody should be sensitive to the rights and legitimate demands of everyone else. In the running of business, usually managers and executives are not persuaded, motivated or pressurized so strongly by ethical considerations as they are by utilitarian and practical concerns. Only people whose vision and attitudes are shaped by moral values and corresponding virtues, especially justice and honesty, will be able to withstand the

enticements of profit and promote ethically sound business. What is required, in other words, is not just good businessmen but good men in business.

2. Collaboration, not confrontation, between disciplines

Business education, policy making and the general business ethos all contribute to the promotion or demotion of ethically sound business. The general business ethos is shaped, among other factors, by major business policies which are affected by the ethical visions and commitments of policy makers and executives who are especially today largely people well educated in business matters. This points to the importance of giving due place to ethics in business education, though this alone is not enough to protect the business world from various woes most people lament about today.

Business education is a branch specializing in the various aspects of effective business like production, distribution, marketing, personnel management, etc., while ethical principles required to discern and assess the good and bad or right and wrong in all these operations do not as such belong to the province of business. They are to be sought in the discipline of ethics. Therefore, business ethics supposes earnest and enlightened collaboration between business and ethics disciplines. It should be handled by persons qualified in ethic morality, who at the same time have enough expertise in the ground realities of business. A business ethicist should not be a pure theoretician, just moralizing from the ivory tower of ethical theories though theories are required, but capable of prudently applying the principles and norms of ethics to the complex and complicated affairs of business. No teacher in business ethics could provide his students with ready-made solutions for all the diverse ethical problems they might face in their professional careers. But he should equip them with an ethical vision, value-hierarchy and application skills which will stand them in good stead in their career decisions so as to protect in the best way possible the good, well-being and interests of all those really involved in a given business.

Further, most of the topics constituting business education course as such are very much practical, result-oriented, evoking and

perfecting the natural skills and talents of the students involved. They are therefore usually very appealing and challenging, albeit demanding, especially for smart and ambitious students. In this context, ethics which is a normative science may well be felt as very theoretical and prescriptive, giving the students comparatively less room for applying their creativity or trying out innovations. It may appear to many as a block to 'smart solutions' to problems, misleading propaganda, shady deals and easy profit-making and hence may not become an attractive subject for many, especially in a consumer culture. All this makes business ethics a demanding subject to teach. Here we feel that the policy of the institution and the calibre of the teacher are very important. The institution should be convinced of the importance of integrating ethics into the curriculum of quality business education. The teacher should be committed to the mission of conscientizing and convincing the students that good business has a 'noble human face' which requires a healthy combination of economic and ethical values in all the operations of business. It is also important to adopt innovative and attractive ways of dealing with ethics and ethical issues, because 'values are caught than taught' especially at the higher education level.

3. Beyond Codes to Values and Virtues

Business firms usually have 'Ethical Codes' or 'Codes of Conduct' as guidelines for their operations and transactions. The making of these norms is often influenced very much by various factors like convenience, expediency, expectations, practicality and profit. Such codes may serve more to project the firms and their operations as honest and clean, and as rules of thumb for negotiating certain difficult situations than to ensure the integration and promotion of genuine ethical values. Executives and employees tend to adhere to them because of their practical utility and as a matter of policy. However, in genuine ethical interest, business practice has to transcend such norms, despite their practical utility, and go to the integral good of the persons involved and the community of persons.

For this to happen, a sound anthropology should serve as the basis of business ethics, because the human person is the focus of business too. The wisdom of the human may be drawn from every valid source like philosophy, religion, socio-cultural institutions, etc. Vatican Council II for example teaches "Just as human activity proceeds from man, so is it ordered toward man... A man is more precious for what he is than for what he has. Similarly, all that men do to obtain greater justice, wider brotherhood, and a more humane ordering of social relationships has greater worth than technical advances"⁵. The observation of K. E. Goodpastor, a leading business ethicist, is quite significant in this context: "In an increasingly global marketplace, our convictions about core human values and virtues need very much to be clarified and strengthened. Now is the time for both Western and Eastern democracies (and both developed and developing nations) to join in the kind of dialogue that can forge shared convictions. Otherwise we diminish ourselves as producers and consumers"⁶. This is very important for evolving a sustainable business ethics in a pluralistic society. Let the major concern of business ethics be clarification and promotion of core human values and their integration into business policies and operations.

Part II. Ethical Theories

Moral Science (Ethics and Moral Theology) is concerned with the issues of good and bad, right and wrong. It tries to present systematically moral laws and norms which are guidelines for being a good person and doing the right actions. It has also to explain why certain actions (prescribed by certain laws) are considered right and certain others (prescribed by other laws) wrong. In order to do this, an ethicist / moralist should have a concept about the ultimate norm of morality in the light of which other norms / laws are justified. What does 'good' finally consist in (the contrary of which is bad) and towards which an action should contribute in order to be right? For example, is happiness, pleasure, utility, will of the authority, self-realization or something else the final criterion of the

5. GS 35

6. S. Sadri and Co, *opus cit.* P.54

moral good? Besides elucidating the final criterion, an ethicist also adopts a method or procedure for judging the morality of an action in the light of the ultimate criterion or specific moral laws. An ethical or a moral theory usually includes all the above, that is, a systematic exposition of moral laws with necessary interpretation, their justification (the final criterion of morality) and a method for moral assessment.

However, since ethics is more a philosophical enterprise, it focusses on the more theoretical tasks among them, esp. justification of the final criterion and the discussion of the method. Being more practical, moral theology pays more attention to a systematic presentation and interpretation of moral laws and rules. Though all ethicists and moralists are concerned with the study of the good/bad and right/wrong, their views about the final criterion of morality, moral method as well as moral laws differ. That is, there are different ethical / moral theories in vogue, which *operate on the basis* of different conceptions and *assumptions* about the human person, his nature and goal. Business ethical policies and operative norms also draw their inspiration and orientation from one or another of these theories. Hence a brief discussion of the major ethical theories will be useful for a deeper understanding of the spirit and thrust of such policies and norms.

1. Contemporary Ethical Theories

Contemporary ethical theories are broadly divided into two categories: teleological and deontological. In the recent history of ethics this distinction seems to have been accentuated by C.D. Broad in 1930. However, divergent approaches to ethics along teleological and deontological lines can be found all through the history of ethics, beginning with the ancient Greek philosophers, as it will be clear later.

Teleological Theories

'Telos' in Greek means end or goal. Teleology as an ethical theory holds that the moral quality (good or bad; right or wrong) of a person or an action depends on the ends or results the person tries to bring about by that action; in other words, it depends on the consequences which a particular act will produce. So, the morality of an action is assessed in the light of the consequences of the act. Since, consequences of action play such a key role in the moral

qualification of the act, the theory may also be called consequentialism. For example, it is more right to tell a lie provided it produces good consequences for somebody than not to tell it in the given situation. While stressing the consequences of the act as the criterion of morality, the theory ignores what is done (the very nature of the act done) for producing the 'good consequences'. The inherent significance of values like honesty, justice, life etc, matters little for strict teleologists and consequentialists.

Utilitarianism

The best known form of teleological approach is probably utilitarianism. What all people seek is happiness. If so, producing as much happiness for as many people as possible is what we are supposed to do. That is, greatest happiness for the greatest number is the ultimate moral standard. Therefore, an action comes to be judged as right or wrong according to its happiness-producing ability. This happiness-producing property of the act is called utility. Hence, the theory is called utilitarianism. The British philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) is the first systematic proponent of this theory, which was later modified by several others.

But what is happiness? Bentham identifies happiness with pleasure and unhappiness with pain. He says that "nature has placed man under the empire of pleasure and pain. We owe to them all our ideas; we refer to them all our judgements and all the determinations of our life. It is for them alone to point to what we ought to do". All do desire pleasure and hence all ought to desire pleasure and act to produce pleasure. Since the theory is so much pleasure-oriented, it can also be called hedonism (*hedone* in Greek means pleasure). In this sense, the theory is not new; it is akin to the teaching of certain ancient Greek philosophers like Aristippus and Epicurus who found the goal of life in the enjoyment of pleasure.

Utilitarianism of Bentham does not make any distinction between different types (sensual, mental, spiritual etc) of pleasure. There are no qualitative differences or hierarchy among various kinds of pleasure. He however admits quantitative differences among pleasures and gives certain criteria to assess them. Those criteria are intensity (whether an act produces more intense or less intense pleasure than an alternative act), duration (more lasting or less lasting pleasure), proximity (pleasure close at hand or remote),

certainly (more sure of giving the pleasure or less sure), purity (pleasure unmixed with pain or mixed with pain), fecundity (capable of generating further pleasures or not) and extent (pleasure affecting more or fewer people). The quantity of pleasure produceable by an act may be assessed in the light of the above dimensions and that course of action which produces greatest happiness (i.e., pleasure) in a given situation will be the morally right action. Hence, anything may be done provided that course of action brings about greater happiness than the alternative courses of action. To take a drastic example, one may kill 3 innocent people if by that he can save 5 other people, because here unhappiness and pain are caused only to 3 people while happiness and pleasure are caused to 5 people. Or, a sick and suffering old man may be killed so that he may be relieved of suffering and his children may inherit and enjoy the property.

We would find such moral thinking and conclusions outrageous. However, utilitarianism has no satisfactory answers to such difficulties and problems. As a moral theory, utilitarianism is not viable or acceptable. Still there is a lot of practical utilitarianism (and utilitarian temptations) in practical life, namely whenever people try to achieve their coveted goals without minding the means they employ. This is perhaps very prevalent today in the business world where profit seems to be the reigning criterion and everything else subservient to it.

Situationism

Another moral theory which belongs to the teleological/consequentialist group is situationism. Its well-known proponent is Joseph Fletcher, an American protestant moral theologian. Fletcher says there are three lines of approach to moral decision making. One is anti-nomian or lawless approach. Here people claim to be guided by their own intuition or spontaneous judgement or even by the Holy Spirit. They repudiate all moral laws and principles. A second approach is legalistic. It provides laws and rules for all kinds of moral behaviour and they are to be strictly adhered to, while the contexts in which laws are to be obeyed are simply ignored.

The third approach is called 'situation ethics' which is what Fletcher proposes. In this approach, very important consideration is given to the contingencies and exigencies of the situation.

Besides situation, Fletcher recognizes one more factor as very important in moral evaluation, namely, the law of self-less love or agape. Love is the final principle for action. Thus, according to Fletcher, one is always supposed to do "the most loving act" in the light of all the contingencies and exigencies of a given situation. The most loving action is also the most moral action; but what is the most loving action in a situation is going to be determined by the particulars of the situation. Fletcher does not approve of the application of any other laws (eg. the laws of the Decalogue) for discerning what would be the loving action in a situation. Suppose, for example, the wife and mother of a family is held captive in a camp, because of which the woman as well as her husband and children are undergoing serious physical and psychological deprivations and mental strain. She knows that she will be released from the camp if she becomes pregnant while in the camp. That is, she can free herself and join the family if she commits adultery and become pregnant. May she do that? Fletcher would say that she has to make her selflessly loving decision after considering all the relevant factors (of the family, herself etc) of the situation. In this decision, only the commandment to love and the particulars of the situation matter, but not the commandment which forbids adultery.

One may envisage for himself where such a moral approach would lead to. Because of the importance the theory accords to 'situation', it is called situationism; because of the importance of selfless love, it is also called agapeism. Again, since the rightness of the action is assessed in the light of the utility of its consequences for meeting the demands of the situation, the theory is consequentialist and utilitarian as well.

Love is a very general moral principle. Its demands need to be understood and assessed in the light of other more specific moral laws like those of the Decalogue (eg. Do not kill, do not commit adultery, do not cheat, etc). By denying the validity and use of such commandments in moral judgment and decision, situationism becomes a very vague and impracticable moral theory. In fact it leads to subjectivism and individualism in morality, because each acting subject or individual is entitled to judge the "most loving action" according to his perceptions and intuitions independent of any objective moral laws. After all, love is subject to very personal and varying interpretations.

Deontology

Deon in Greek means duty. Deontology is a moral theory which emphasizes duty, that is, right or wrong is assessed in the light of one's duties and obligations. But what are one's duties and how are they recognized? One's moral duties are basically inscribed in one's own being or nature as a human person. And they can be discovered by man's practical reason, reflecting properly on the basic tendencies, exigencies, goals and relationships of the human person. For example, everyone is aware of his basic desire to preserve his life, to maintain the integrity of his body and psyche, to nurture relationships and companionship; the tendency to look for fidelity and honesty in behaviour; the search for meaning and significance of life, etc. A correct perception and understanding of these enables one to grasp what is good or bad for the human person and consequently what the moral obligations are. The moral commandments (eg. the commandments of the Decalogue) are more concrete formulations of the moral obligations emanating from one's personal nature. Since all of us share in the same human nature, we are all bound by those laws. The purpose of those laws is to protect and promote the good, well-being and flourishing of the human person and the community of persons. Hence, an action is judged right or wrong depending on whether it contributes to the above said good or goes against it. More practically, we can judge the right or wrong of an action in the light of its correspondence to or deviation from moral laws, which are guidelines for the realization of the good. (The above is a general description of the deontological approach, abstracting from certain nuances within it.)

Teleology vs Deontology

Since consequences are the all important moral criteria in teleology and consequentialism, here morality becomes extrinsic to the act. The very nature or quality of the act is irrelevant for morality. In fact, consequentialism does not have the concept of 'moral good' and 'moral evil' as such. Moral good/evil is "constituted" by the net result of tallying the advantages, profits and gains produced by an act with its disadvantages, loss and pains. Otherwise, there is no act which is morally good or bad in itself; that is, acts which by their very nature are good or bad for the human person as such. Therefore, according to consequentialism, one can do also what is forbidden

by moral laws (eg. killing, cheating, sexual abuse, etc) provided it produces some "greater goods" (i.e. more advantages and benefits). Thus, it goes against the traditional and well accepted moral maxim, "End does not justify the means" or that one may not do evil in order to attain good (Rom 3:8). The consequent danger of subjectivism and relativism have been already mentioned earlier. Further, it is not at all easy to foresee and assess all the consequences of an act; hence here moral assessment becomes a fortuitous and uncertain task. However, a good point implied in teleological theories is the attention they give to consequences of the act (which they do exclusively and one-sidedly) in its moral evaluation.

Deontological theory on the contrary, is very much an objective approach to morality. Because the demands of moral laws are usually considered to be clear and one's duty is to follow them in any given situation. Therefore, there is very little risk of subjectivism and relativism. Further, it is not difficult to see that according to this approach certain actions are inherently bad (eg. killing, cheating adultery etc) because they, by their very nature, do harm to human persons. Such actions cannot be justified or made right by whatever further consequences they may produce. They are called "intrinsically evil acts" or absolutely evil. But according to teleological theory, we saw, there are no such intrinsically evil acts. This is a key difference between the two theories and is the basis for other differences (eg. subjectivism vs objectivity; relativism vs absolutism) between them. Deontology is often criticized for its rigidity, not paying due attention to the consequences of the act and to the complexity involved in concrete moral situations. However, deontologists stand strongly for moral principles and values, resisting the contemporary tendency to moral subjectivism and relativism. It staunchly defends the moral maxim "End does not justify means". But how many business ethicists and business men would seriously accept it?

2. The Catholic Approach

Of the two major moral theories the catholic tradition could not have unqualifiedly accepted the general teleological theory in its utilitarian or situationist variety because they lack objective foundation for moral evaluation, do not give importance to the commandments of God and lead to subjective and individualistic morality.

However, the catholic approach is sometimes called "teleological" in a particular sense, that is, in as far as the aim of all morality is the attainment of the final goal or end (telos = end) of the human, which consists, in his beatifying union with God. As *Veritatis Splendor* (VS), Pope John Paul II's encyclical notes, the moral life has an essential "teleological" character, since it consists in the deliberate ordering of human acts to God, the supreme good and ultimate end (telos) of man" (73). This use of teleology should be distinguished from the consequentialist use of teleology which is a method of assessing the morality of an act in the light of the consequences of the act, but does not give due consideration to the ultimate end of the human. VS calls teleology as a method *teleologism* and rejects it (75).

The catholic approach has been predominantly deontological, with certain elements of the teleological method absorbed into it. We analyse it in some detail for a better understanding of it.

Sources of morality: object, intention and circumstances

The catholic approach assesses the morality of an act in the light of three aspects of the act (usually called the sources of morality) which are the object, intention and circumstances.

Any of our act has some inherent effect which belongs to the very nature or essence of that act. Therefore, a particular act cannot be said to have been done unless its natural effect has been produced. Such natural or essential effect of an act is what is known as the object of an act. It is usually defined as that towards which the act is directly and primarily ordained. Take, for example, the act of killing. It is essentially ordained to causing (or effecting) the death of someone, without which there will not be any killing. "Object is the proximate end of a deliberate decision" says VS (78). That is, object is what the agent, in doing the act, directly and immediately wills and effects. For further examples, in stealing there is appropriation of another's property against his reasonable will (without which there is no stealing); in adultery there is sexual union violating marital love and fidelity (otherwise it will not be adultery); in almsgiving there is provision of help for material needs (without which there is no almsgiving) and so on. Thus we see that the object of an act is practically the very definition of that act. VS seems to look at the

object in this sense when it says "The object of the act of willing is in fact a freely chosen kind of behaviour" (78). Please note that the object of the act as understood here is not what consequentialism means by consequences of the act (see later).

Intention refers to the end of the agent in doing the act; what he wants to achieve or gain by doing that act. For example, A kills B in order to rob his house; C steals from D in order to help E who is a poor man; F gives alms in order to be seen and praised by others; G, a criminal, kills H in order to eliminate an adverse witness; and so on. These examples show that the intention of the agent does not belong to the object of the act, but is brought or "added" to it by the agent. Of course, an agent may do sometimes an act intending only the natural end (i.e., object) of the act. Then the object of the act and the intention of the agent coincide as when someone gives alms just to help the other, without any ulterior purpose. Even then the intention of the agent as such, is something "added" to the object. Circumstances refer to various adjuncts of an act answering questions like who, whom, how, when, where, etc. Regarding killing it can be asked who killed whom; how (shooting, poisoning....), where (in the street, at home), etc. Usually it is said that the object of the act answers the question what? (What was done); intention of the agent answers the question what for or why? (for what purpose or end it was done); circumstances answer all other questions regarding the act.

The catholic approach takes all three factors (object, intention and circumstances) of the act into consideration in its moral assessment. However, the most important factor here is the object. Whether an act is morally good or bad (or indifferent) is primarily determined by the object. If it is something (eg. protecting a human life) that fosters the good of the person, or, more concretely, is in according with the moral law (e.g. the moral law "Do not kill"), then the act will be good. If the object is something (e.g. deceiving another person) that goes against the good of the person, or more practically, is against the moral law (e.g. "Do not tell lies"), then the act will be bad. VS says regarding this: "The morality of the human act depends primarily and fundamentally on the "object" rationally

chosen by the deliberate will" (78). This is so because, as we saw, the object denotes the essential character - either good or bad for the person - of the act, and the act cannot be willed and done without realizing its object. Consequently whoever wills an act, wills directly and immediately the goodness or badness of its object. VS says that the object establishes whether the act is "capable of being ordered to the good and to the ultimate end, which is God" (79).

The intention of the agent has only a secondary or subsidiary role in determining the morality of the act. Suppose A steals some money from B for gambling, and C steals some money from D in order to help a poor man. Both are acts of stealing (determined by 'object') and wrong. C's good intention of helping a poor man does not convert the wrong act of stealing into a right act; however, it reduces the badness of C's act. Hence, here C's stealing is "less bad" than that of A whose purpose was bad (squandering money). If A gives alms to B not only to help B but also to be seen and praised by others, the goodness of A's good act of charity is reduced because of his bad (selfish and vainglorious) intention. Thus, usually the intention does not change the moral nature of the act, but only increases or decreases its moral quality.

As for circumstances, all of them may not be relevant in the moral assessment of the act. For example, whether a murder was committed on a Monday or Tuesday, or whether it was by shooting or poisoning does not make a difference in its morality. But a poor man's stealing from a rich man is different from a rich man's stealing from a poor man. The poor man is constrained by his poverty; besides, the inconvenience or injury caused to the rich man will be insignificant. Despite these "favourable circumstances" the poor man's act of stealing does not become a good act. They only reduce the evil of his act. That is, circumstances also have only a subsidiary role in contributing to the morality of the act. VS says "If acts are intrinsically evil, a good intention or circumstances can diminish their evil, but they cannot remove it, They remain "irremediably" evil acts; per se and in themselves they are not capable of being ordered to God and to the good of the person" (81). Hence it is wrong to do, whatever the apparent justification contained in one's intention and

circumstances be, an intrinsically evil act. The good intention and circumstances may reduce the evil of the act, but do not change it into a good or right act. Thus, for example, it is not right to rob a rich man in order to feed the poor, to tell a lie in order to spare somebody from punishment, to commit adultery to be released from prison or to commit prostitution to earn a living and so on.

Are there intrinsically good acts? As objectively bad acts are called intrinsically bad acts, objectively good acts (eg. praising God, giving alms, telling the truth, etc) should have been called "intrinsically good" acts because by their nature they are ordered to the good of persons. But remember that their goodness can be reduced by bad intention (eg. one gives alms out of charity and to be seen and praised by others) or unfavourable circumstances (singing praises to God in a situation that causes trouble and inconvenience to others) just as the evil of a bad act could be reduced by a good intention or a favourable circumstances. However, if a good act is done solely with bad intention (egs. praying solely to be seen and praised by others; helping a poor man with the sole intention of making him an agent to murder somebody), the act become wholly bad. So a totally bad intention turns an objectively good act into a bad one (but a totally good intention could not, as we saw earlier, turn a bad act into a good one, but only reduce its evil). Therefore, while objectively bad acts have been called "intrinsically evil" (i.e. always and everywhere evil) objectively good acts are not called "intrinsically good" (which would mean always and everywhere good) because they could be turned bad by a wholly bad intention.

In short, catholic moral teaching requires us to do good acts with good intention and as far as possible in morally favourable circumstances. Consequently, it also asks us not to do bad acts even with a good intention. All this is in accordance with the basic moral norm which requires everyone to do good and avoid evil to the best of his ability (compare this position with utilitarian - situationist positions which give top priority to consequences, i.e., consequences contained in intention and circumstances, in the moral evaluation of an act).

Conflict Situations

Though the fundamental moral command 'Do good and avoid evil' is always valid, we are not able to do all that is good because of our various limitations. More basic is the obligation to avoid evil. But in fact we are not able to avoid all evils always because sometimes whichever alternative we choose in a given situation, it inevitably effects evil. For example, a train is running at a very high speed and all of a sudden a person appears on the track. If the driver applies sudden-break, several passengers will be injured and killed; if not, the man on the track will be killed. Whichever alternative the driver takes, it causes death. It is beyond the control of the driver in the given situation to avert both the evils. He is unable not to cause either one of the deaths. Or, the captain of a ship sailing on troubled sea had to either throw out the valuable goods or let the ship sink with the crew. In such unavoidable conflict situations one has to choose that action which is going to effect lesser evil. Here one is not choosing evil as such, but trying to minimize the evil that will inevitably be caused in the given situation. Considering all the relevant factors and judging which course of action would be "lesser evil" will not always be easy. But the principle is sound and is to be followed as best as one can, in such situations.

Another type of conflicts we usually face is when good and bad are conjoined in the same act. A well-known example is the case of a pregnant woman who is diagnosed to have uterus-cancer. In order to save the life of the mother, an operation (hysterectomy) has to be performed, which results also in the death of the still non-viable child. This operation in this case has two effects; one good (saving the life of the mother) and the other bad (death of the child). For other examples, many of the medicines that people take have not only the good effect of curing the diseases but also several bad side-effects. A big factory operating in a locality contributes to the economic betterment of people (good effect) and also to the contamination of the atmosphere and consequent health problems (bad effect). How and why are such evil producing actions allowed?

Catholic moral theology has traditionally resorted to the so-called principle of double effect to deal with actions which produce two

effects, one good and the other bad. The principle specifies four conditions which have to be verified if such an act is to be legitimately done. The conditions are 1) The act which produces the two effects should not be bad in itself (it may be objectively a good act or an indifferent act, but not a bad one); 2) The agent may intend only the good effect (the bad effect he may only tolerate, though he knows that the bad effect will also be produced); 3) Both the effects should proceed equally immediately from the act (so that the bad effect is not used as a means for achieving the good effect); 4) There should be equality or proportion between the good and the bad effects. Notice that the first three conditions are meant to ensure that the agent even in such a conflict situation does not do something intrinsically evil, does not directly intend what is bad and that he does not attain good by means of evil. The fourth condition states that consenting to bring about something evil may be justified only if an equally weighty good is attained.

All these conditions are satisfactorily verified in the case of the pregnant woman with cancerous uterus. In this case, the act done is an operation, which is not something intrinsically evil. The second condition is verified provided what the woman truly desires is her recovery from the disease and not the death of the child. The third condition also is verified because both effects are equally immediately caused by the same act of operation. Therefore, the death of the child (bad effect) is not used as a means for saving the life of the mother (good effect). What saves the life of the mother is the operation which in this case has a side-effect namely, the death of the child. And that is just tolerated. The fourth condition is also verified because for one life which is lost another life is saved.

The conditions of the principle of double effect are usually verified in the case of various medications and treatments and often in the case of factories and so on. Anyway today we are more aware of the ecological hazards of big factories and similar enterprises. But look at another case, namely, that of committing an abortion in order to avert the unpleasant consequences of a pregnancy out of wedlock. The good effect intended is saving the name and reputation of the woman and the bad effect is the death of the child. We can

easily see that the conditions of "double effect principle" are not verified in this case. First of all, the action done is abortion, which is something bad in itself. The second condition may be verified if the woman intends only protecting her good name and reputation and not the death of the child. (But then it can be asked whether there are no other means, apart from abortion, to save her reputation without killing the baby. There could very well be. Then the verification of the second condition also becomes problematic). The third condition also is not verified because the act done (i.e., aborting the child) surely effects the death of the child (i.e. the bad effect); but it does not ensure the reputation of the woman (i.e. good effect) with the same effectiveness. That is, the act is not equally the cause of both effects. In fact, here the death of the child is a partial requirement (or a means adopted) for saving the reputation of the mother. That is doing evil to attain good. The fourth condition also remains unfulfilled because the life of the child is a more important value than the reputation of the woman though good name and reputation has its own value. Hence, evidently abortion may not be done for such purposes.

Our discussion of the catholic position so far shows that while demanding us to do good, it sternly and consistently requires that evil not be intended or done, even with a view to achieving some good. This position has been criticized by several as too rigid, especially in conflict situations (remember "double effect" situations) of which there are many in contemporary life. It was from such critical discussion of conflict situations and the principle of double effect that the theory of proportionalism emerged.

Proportionalism

This is an approach that has been proposed by many contemporary catholic moral theologians. Despite certain nuances among some of them, the main theory of catholic proportionalists is explained below.

The proportionalists accept the three sources of morality of the tradition. But they do not accept the one-sided primacy and importance which the tradition accords to the object of the act in

moral evaluation. They admit that an act which is objectively bad has an inherent evil in it; but that alone does not make it always and everywhere so evil (i.e., intrinsically evil) that it cannot be justified by any good intention or circumstances. They argue for example that killing is objectively bad; but it is justified in self-defense and capital punishment. Similarly, lying is objectively bad. But there are situations where lying has been justified. For example, A sees B, a poor unarmed man, running for life and hiding himself in a bush in order to escape the attack of C who was pursuing him in order to kill him. Having lost trace of B, C asks A whether he has seen B. If A tells the truth, C will find out B and kill him. Can A tell a lie in order to save the life of B. Traditional catholic moral theology also allows it though it calls it "mental restriction". These objectively bad acts (e.g., killing and lying) become justified because of the particular circumstances and the good intentions (defending self, protecting order and security within a community; protecting another's life) of the agents. Since these acts are justified at least by certain good intentions and particular circumstances, they should not be considered intrinsically evil.

Therefore, they argue that all three sources, especially object and intention, should be given equal or due importance in the assessment of the act. While accepting the importance of the object, proportionalists hold that the intention of the agent is also very important because it expresses the purpose of the agent; it reflects the orientation of the will of the agent. Therefore the moral quality of the intention becomes very significant in moral assessment. Similarly, relevant circumstances also should be given due consideration. Thus, 1) an act is good/right if its object *and* the intention of the agent are good/right; 2) An act is bad/wrong, if its object *and* the intention of the agent are bad/wrong; 3) An act is bad/ wrong if the whole intention of the agent is bad/wrong even if the object is good/right. (All these three positions of proportionalism are acceptable also to the traditional catholic position). In fact, the third norm emphasizes the significance of intention in as far as it serves to transform an objectively good act into a bad one.

What about the morality of an act, of which the object is bad but the intention of the agent is good. Proportionalists hold that such an act should not be simply called bad (as it used to be done in the tradition) on the basis of the object alone. Here, one should weigh the good contained in the intention (and also in the relevant circumstances) and the bad contained in the object. 4) If there is proportion between the good and the bad (or equality between the value protected and the value lost) the act is to be considered good; if there is no proportion between the good and the bad, then the act is bad. In proportionalist terms, the evil that is contained in an objectively bad act is only a 'pre-moral' evil (some call it ontic evil and some others call it non-moral evil). Therefore, it may be done for a proportionately good end. It becomes truly moral evil only if it is done without a proportionately good end; that is, if more evil than good is effected by the act. Since the critical factor which determines the morality of such an act is the proportion between good and bad, the theory is called proportionalism.

Implications and comments

One can easily see that proportionalism rejects the traditional teaching that objectively bad acts are also intrinsically bad acts, and that they are never allowed even for a good end. Consequently, it holds that 'end justifies means' provided there is proportion. This contradicts as we saw earlier our ordinary moral wisdom that 'one may not do evil in order to attain good'. In those conflict situations where traditional catholic moral theology would apply the "principle of double effect", proportionalists would apply proportionalism which requires only one of the four conditions of the principle of double effects, namely that there be proportion between the good effect and the bad effect (which is a common condition in both approaches).

Proportionalist position also weakens the solid objective foundation of morality. Each one may be tempted to think that the good he intends is proportionate to the evil that may be produced and thus feel justified in doing what is evil in order to attain the good he has in mind. Since comparing the values (good and bad) contained in one's actions is a very difficult or a practically impossible

task, people can easily go wrong and deceive themselves. This leads to subjectivism and relativism in morality. This would cause uncertainty, confusion and permissiveness in practical moral life, opening the way for further moral decline in a world which is already very much self-seeking and hedonistic.

However, though proportionalism shares certain features of consequentialism (i.e., the importance given to intention and circumstances) it should not be identified with consequentialism and its utilitarian or situationist varieties. Nor should its dangers and defects be exaggerated. That proportionalism gives due importance to the object of the act together with intention and circumstances (i.e., consequences) differentiates it from consequentialism for which consequences are the sole or most important consideration. Besides, catholic proportionalists accept a system and hierarchy of moral norms and values based on natural law and divine revelation. Thus they avoid the utilitarian, hedonistic and situationist way of assessing the good and the bad of an act. Hence, proportionalism is also called moderate or mixed consequentialism. *Veritatis Splendor* itself notes that "many of the catholic moralists who follow in this direction seek to distance themselves from utilitarianism and pragmatism, where the morality of human acts would be judged without any reference to the man's true ultimate end"(74). In fact, catholic proportionalists as a whole are careful to respect and promote the accepted catholic values while expounding proportionalism. Still, many of them would admit that weighing values is very difficult, especially when values from different areas of morality conflict. Which is, for example, more important: personal relationship or chastity; life or marital fidelity; honesty or reputation; justice or health, and so on? Not an easy matter to settle in individual cases or in terms of general norms. There are also catholic moralists who hold that values like the above ones are all equal and hence one cannot be subordinated to another. It is perhaps such uncertainty and obscurity that may let in subjectivism and relativism in practical moral life. Hence also the need of caution in proposing proportionalism.

Conclusion

We have briefly exposed the major ethical theories which usually serve as frameworks for business ethical policies and operations. J.R.D. Tata's observation, referred to elsewhere in this issue, that there is a need today to rekindle old principles and ethical values which are often neglected now-a-days for accelerating and amassing profits reveals that the utilitarian theory is very strong in business approach and practice today. It needs to be remedied by a reinstallation of those ethical principles and values which have been traditionally accepted, and hence are always valid and are to be respected. This points to the significance of the deontological approach, which stresses that the means one employs to attain one's goal (e.g., to enhance profits) is as important, in ethical evaluation, as the goal itself. This view however may be rejected by many as too rigid an ethical theory.

No ethical theory is in fact so perfect or adequate that its principles and method can be neatly used to all the various and complex ethical issues. Theories should be supplemented by genuine concern and consequent action for the integral well-being of all those involved in or affected by a business project. In this context, the following priorities deserve special attention:

- 1) The needs of the poor take priority over the wants of the rich;
- 2) The freedom of the dominated takes priority over the liberty of the powerful;
- 3) The participation of marginalized groups takes priority over the preservation of an order which excludes them¹.

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¹. D.Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict*, 1979, P. 204.

Ethics in Business: The Catholic Contribution

Cyriac Kottayarikil

Business ethics is in the look-out for a solid foundation. The purity of mind required in any decision-maker by the Indian Scriptural tradition offers a possible approach in this direction. The Christian Scriptures go a step further and emphasize the character of the persons involved and the virtues that inspire them. In this context the author suggests that the Catholic social teaching, especially the papal encyclicals of the recent past and the natural law doctrine propounded by Thomas Aquinas can help modern business ethicists in their search for an anchor. A few points for a fruitful dialogue are also put forward. Fr. Cyriac Kottayarikil is Professor of Business Ethics and Organizational Behaviour at Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRI) over the past 16 years. He holds a doctorate in Moral Theology and fellow membership in Psychoanalysis, Indian and International.

A three-day international workshop, organized by the Management Centre for Human Values (MCHV), Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta in February 1998 focussed on the philosophical and cultural foundations of Business Ethics. Prof. S K Chakraborty, the Indian Guru of Business Ethics as the brain behind this great event, could draw together the work of 18 very senior and widely experienced academicians and practitioners, spanning four continents. This workshop explored the most important topics of applied ethics in management.¹

The main objective of this workshop was to broaden ethical awareness and present a framework of actions for managers who face an increasingly complex business environment today. There was a consensus among the participants that the ideas of ethics in practice need to arise out of "values-in-the-bing", and not from any ad-hoc adjustments.

1. The proceedings of this Workshop are published : S.K.Chakraborty and S.R. Chatterjee, (ed.), *Applied Ethics in Management: Towards New Perspectives*, (Springer - Verlag, Berlin, 1999).

A panel discussion under the title *Twenty-first Century Ethic - Knowledge or Wisdom ?* focused exactly on this point. All the six members of the panel and practically all the participants agreed that the present-day Business Ethics is resting on a very shaky foundation. Hence a radical question was raised: Where do we look for a more solid base for ethics in business. Different views emerged.

The Vedantic Alternative

The Vedantic perspectives² are suggested in this context as a possible alternative? Over the past two decades Prof. Chakraborty has demonstrated through his several publications on this subject, the need for a total integration of the western systems with the Indian spirit. The western management systems, practices and skills have to be guided and nurtured by a holistic, home-grown cultural ethos and values-system. Present-day organizations and institutions are almost exclusively dependent on a secular rationality and a purely analytical-intellectual approach, which prescribes a totally materialistic pursuit of wealth and consumption. The consequences as we experience today are : growing distrust, vulgarity, insanity, exploitation of resources, victimization of individuals, quick commercialism, greed, frustrations, fear and hate.

The secular rationality has to be supplemented by or even transformed into what Dr. Chakraborty calls *sacred rationality*:

I feel and suggest that two broad types of rationality manifest themselves in our existence: 'secular rationality' (SER) and 'sacred rationality' (SAR). The secular is bound up with the material, the sacred is embedded in the spiritual. The secular mind breeds its own kind of rationality, while the sacred too fosters its own level of rationality. Rationality is not the exclusive preserve of the secular mind/consciousness. The scared mind/consciousness too quite surely evolves and displays its own rationality. History records for us the epochal transformation of the tyrannical king Ashoka to the benign monk Ashoka³.

2. For a deeper analysis of these perspectives, cfr. S.K. Chakraborty, *Ethics in Management : Vedantic Perspectives*, (Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1995)

3. ... *Ibid.* p. 233

While Arjuna in Chapter one of the *Gita* who talks about the righteous battle in the *Mahabharatha* is a representation of the secular rationality, *Sri Krishna* who demolishes Arjuna's reasoning is a symbol of sacred rationality. However, in the last Chapter, we find Arjuna returning to Krishna to say *Karishye Vachanam tava* (I shall act according to the spirit of Thy counsel).

This extremely condensed outline of the Vedantic perspectives on human life and social relations suggests a desirable transition from the *purely rational* to the purity of heart. A business ethics that is founded on a pragmatic reason alone is bound to fail as a conceptual system and practical guideline.

The Vedanta inspires us to learn, acquire knowledge, strive towards a goal, reflect, use knowledge for social action, rise from the lower to the higher levels of life and perform our duty towards society and depart from the world in a spirit of returning home after completing this earthly journey. Hence, the vedantic wisdom supplies an ethical base to counter-balance the weight of insecurity, fear, lust, egoism, hatred and aggressiveness. It requires us to surrender our lower selves - ego, greed, arrogance and vanity.

Dr. Chakraborty suggests in this context an "ethico-moral business ashram"⁴, where the emphasis has to be on the pursuit of the psychological, effective features of an ashram. As the uniqueness of the Indian model of civilization lies in the "sacro-secular symbiosis"⁵, the sacred, the spiritual guides and nurtures the secular - the material in all its manifestation has to be under the dictates of the sacred.

The Christian Approach

In the *International Workshop on Applied Ethics* mentioned above, the author presented a paper on "Biblical wisdom and the 21st Century Ethics" for panel discussion⁶. It suggested that moral reasoning and human character have to be viewed not just from their human purposes but from the point of view of a divine design.

4 *Ibid* p. 26-29

5 S.K. Chakraborty, *Management by Values - Towards Cultural Congruence* (Oxford University Press, 1991) Ch. 8

6 Cfr. The Proceedings of the Workshop, MCHV, IIM, Calcutta 1998

A religiously founded moral reasoning rests on the idea of the sacred. Here it is assumed that there is a way of finding the will and activity of God in nature and in human being. There are different means of divine self-communication like the revelation through the Bible, the natural light of reason, experienced history or rituals. As the moral reasoning is anchored on to the divine will, human actions and practices refer back to a transcendental power which serves as the ultimate in moral decision-making.

The idea of the Biblical Wisdom as presented in the Old Testament can shed some light on this matter. The word *wisdom* as used especially in the wisdom literature, comprising the books of Wisdom, Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes and some Psalms covers much of what is included under its modern usage but had a wider connotation as well. It was considered to be a special gift of the sages.

King Solomon was the first, and the model of wisdom teachers. "God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding and knowledge as vast as the sand on the shore. He was wiser than any man. People from all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon."⁷ "How wise you were in your youth, Solomon, as full of understanding as a river. Your spirit covered the earth, you filled it with proverbs and parables"⁸. Down through the centuries Solomon's judgement over the two harlots who claimed the motherhood of a child has become the symbol of his wisdom.⁹ At his final verdict on this case people marvelled, seeing that God's wisdom was in him to render justice.

Wisdom was the total of the intellectual culture of the age. It was both more and less than philosophy. For the Greeks philosophy meant love of wisdom. The practical shrewdness of traders and administrators, incipient science, general knowledge, reflection of known facts, all went into the total of wisdom. In King David's time there were professional wise persons,¹⁰ though interestingly those who are mentioned there are women.

7 1 Kings 4: 29-34. All the Biblical quotations are from *The Christian Community Bible*, Claretian Publications, Manila, 1988

8 Sirach 47: 14-15

9 1 Kings 3: 16-28

10 See. II Samuel 14: 1-20: 16-22

Wisdom in the Old Testament included essentially three elements:

- 1 *practical intelligence to govern one's house and to achieve success*¹¹.
- 2 *the ability to put one's life in order according to the law of God*¹².
- 3 *it is a gift of God*¹³

Although such a practical shrewdness has to come from above, it can be obtained by meditating on the sayings of the wisemen¹⁴ in overcoming one's whims¹⁵ in perseverance in trials¹⁶ in meditating on the law,¹⁷ and in reflecting on one's experience.¹⁸

In short, according to the Old Testament *Wisdom* proceeded from *God* and it is another word for *God's* activity in all created things. In particular it operates in human life as an inner force that increasingly leads people to values that transcend material gains and mundane goals.

The Bible presents wisdom as a full human response inspired by God. It is the gift of the spirit that initiates acts of virtues. Reason and logic can hardly discover it, the heart only can experience it, because as Billy Graham once said : Knowledge is horizontal, but wisdom is vertical - it comes from above. It enlivens and animates life and relations on earth.

The Catholic Perspectives

Catholic traditions always held that the foundation of moral reasoning about business practices rests on what God reveals. They insist on a dynamic vision of human societies endowed by God with the capacity to evolve creatively towards the economic inclusion and flourishing of all their members.

11 Kings 10:6; Ezekiel 28:4-8: "Your wisdom and know-how have earned you a fortune. Clever in trade you became wealthy and as your fortune increased your heart became prouder."

12 Proverbs 16: 1-11; Sirach 15: 1-3- 24: 23-30

13 Sirach 1: 1; Wisdom 6: 14-16; 9:1-6

14 Proverbs 1:6; 13:20; Sirach 6:34-36

15 Sirach I 1:1 - I 0; 23: 1-7; Proverbs 16-3 2

16 Sirach 2: 1-14

17 Sirach 32 : 7-24; 39: 1-11

18 Ecclesiastes 1: 12-18; 2: 1-1 1; Sirach 34: 9-11.

The catholic perspectives on business ethics can be understood from two different sets of directions in the contemporary teaching and analysis :

- (i) over a hundred-year old history of papal social teaching, and
- (ii) the "natural law" reasoning about business practices

The Papal Teachings

The papal encyclicals starting with Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum* (1891) up through John Paul II's *Centessimus Annus* (1991) have underlined the church's tradition of social teaching as it evolved dynamically in response to the structural changes involved in the history of modern economic development. The church is always concerned about the economic and social hardships faced by ordinary people who must accommodate their lives to the consequences and changes brought about by Government policies and systemic mutations.

Rerum Novarum (*The Condition of Labour* 1891) was a cry of protest and a call for justice. It came out at a time of political turbulence in Europe. Pope Leo intended catholics to participate in social movements through Catholic organizations and stand up for the workers' rights. Moreover, he claimed that the church could reconcile the two poles of economic development, capitalism and socialism and bring social order and distributive justice. Thomism, with its balanced rationalism was the intellectual foundation of the Catholic middle way.

Rerum Novarum focused on the living wage, a prescription based upon human rights, the right to life and to the means necessary to sustain life. This encyclical defended a moral right to private ownership of the means of production. It also envisaged employers and employees to structure their relationship in terms of moral rights and mutual obligations. However, this document did not advocate collective bargaining or a right to strike. It promoted more cooperative pursuits among the different constituents of industry rather than unhealthy competition. The Pope insisted on the kinds of reforms that would follow naturally within a social order that gravitated toward the common good.

19 For a detailed analysis of the social encyclicals. cfr: John A. Coleman, *One hundred-years of Catholic Social Teaching Celebration and Challenge* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1991)

Quadragesimo Anno (Reconstruction of the Social Order 1931) by Pope Pius XI was a call for a radical change of structures, as wealth and political power were being concentrated in certain corners. He did, however, favour to a large measure of free enterprise, where people have to be left alone in doing business without undue interference by either the state or capitalistic monopolies. The Pope denounced passionately the system of organized greed.

The keynote of *Quadragesimo Anno* was social justice, a term introduced in this document, which specified the common good, not competition as the directive principle of social institutions. The emphasis was on social responsibility, duty, order and discipline.

Mater et Magistra (Christianity and Social progress, 1961) by Pope John XXIII was a bold statement on the advantages of modernizing our societies : "Economic progress must be accompanied by a corresponding social progress, so that all classes of citizens can participate in the increased productivity. Utmost vigilance and effort is needed to ensure that all social inequalities, so far from increasing, are reduced to a minimum" (MM,73).

Populorum Progressio (Development of Peoples 1967) by Pope Paul VI suggested that the basic criterion of a just social order is the complete development of the human being. The final part of this document deals with the development of the human race in the spirit of solidarity. It ends with an appeal to all people of good will to achieve a responsible development of humankind in which all human beings will have an opportunity to find their fulfillment.

Laborem Exercens (On Human Work, 1981) by Pope John Paul II is a clear affirmation of the reality of one social moral order for all. A strong point in this encyclical concerns the priority of the person and of the subjective aspect of work. Human work has an ethical dimension of its own which clearly and directly remains linked to the fact that the one who carries it out is a person, a conscious and free subject, a subject that decides about oneself. One section of this encyclical (IV, par. 16-23) is devoted to the rights of workers, seen within the broad range of human rights. Work is the key to making life more human and labour comes before capital; all capital is a result of human labour.

The other two important encyclicals of Pope John Paul II *Sollicitudo rei socialis*, (on social concern, 1987), and *Centessimus Annus*, (Hundredth Year, 1991) repeated traditional catholic emphasis on the moral and spiritual dignity of work and workers. Labour is understood as the result of cooperative activity involving both employees and employers. Without labour no capital would even have been produced. Capital in this sense is the collection of means by which man appropriates natural resources and transforms them in accordance with his needs.

Other Church Documents

Justitia in Mundo (*Justice in the World*, 1971) the work of the memorable Bishops' Synod emphasizes that the Gospel demands justice and the liberation of all humanity as an essential expression of Christian love. There is one social moral order and one social justice that all must work together for trying to attain.

Gaudium et Spes (*The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* 1965) by the Vatican Council II gives a theological basis for the Catholic social teaching. It advises all individuals and governments to undertake a genuine sharing of their goods, and calls for a truly universal economic order, which requires not merely reforms in socio-economic life but bold transformations in its structures. Such a social order should be founded on truth, built on justice and animated by love; should grow day-by-day toward a more humane balance.

Economic Justice for All : Catholic Social Teaching and the U.S. Economy - This economic pastoral letter passed overwhelmingly by the United States bishops in November 1986, is perhaps the most extensive of the national reflections on the Social Teachings of the Church. Although its strengths and weaknesses may be judged differently today, it stands out unique in its content and approach. It is an attempt to make the American version of capitalism more humanitarian in nature.

The most pronounced criticisms against this economic pastoral letter came from the South American countries. Leonardo Boff for example, qualified it as an attempt to repair a "flawed system" and not to replace it. According to him, there is no attempt for a radical cure of the systemic woes of capitalism. The American bishops did not accept the theories of economic dependency that make the

poverty of the Third World the result of exploitation on the part of the capitalists of the First World.

The quick run through the important papal encyclicals and some other documents on the social teaching of the Catholic church helps in evolving a positive dialogue between modern economic systems and growth patterns on the one hand, and the traditional deposit of the church's faith on the other. The papal teaching of the past century has provided some basic moral guidance for industrializing and post-industrial societies.

What is now required is "enlarging the conversation"²⁰. A tradition anchored by obligations inherited from the past will have an affinity for moral decision making rooted on stable principles. The work of a business ethicist is to establish the relative moral authority of both tradition and principles and develop a plausible equilibrium to provide specific guidance.

The Natural Law Tradition

Out of the different forms of Catholic reflections on moral issues "the one that has most deeply influenced the moral culture of Catholics and that has addressed in greatest detail the moral issues raised by commercial activities, is the natural law tradition that was articulated in the thirteenth century by Thomas Aquinas..."²¹ It is in fact the most fundamental and enduring component of Catholic morality.

One author claims that the natural law tradition of Thomas Aquinas is superior to the "theories of those imprisoned within modernity (which) can provide only ideological rationalizations, the rationalizations of modern deontology, modern consequentialism and modern contractarianism"²².

The natural law tradition has been fashioned mainly out of four elements, the celtic penitentials, the medieval decretals, the writings

20 S. W. Herman, "Enlarging the Conversation", in *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol. 7, No.2 (March 1997) pp 5-20

21 Manuel Velasquez and F. Neil Brady. "Natural Law and Business Ethics", *Business Ethics Quarterly*, Vol.7, N,2 (March 1997) p.83

22 Alasdair MacIntyre, *Three Rival Versions of moral Enquiry : Encyclopedia, Genealogy, Tradition* (Notre Dame : University of Notre Dame Press, 1990) p.194.

of St. Thomas Aquinas, and the casuist tradition of the 18th century. The Penitentials, the practical guide for confessors focussed on prohibitions and constraints. They identified the wrongful personal act or vice, without providing any theoretical justifications.

The Decretals, as papal rulings on "right living", intended to be an objective basis for resolving moral issues, can provide only some general guidelines today, although they were an essential part of the official canon law of the church. Both the Penitentials and the Decretals insisted on the central importance of sin and vice in moral life.

Aquinas and the Natural Law Tradition

St. Thomas Aquinas, the 13th century monk, is the one who could arrange all the traditional elements of moral life into a comprehensive theory founded on Aristotelian ideas. Aquinas suggested that there are "self-evident" normative principles that govern practical reason, about what one ought to do, like "good ought to be pursued by action and evil avoided", which according to him, is the primary principle of natural law.

There are some fundamental goods for which we have natural inclination to desire, for example, human life, the union of male and female, a well ordered society, care of one's children, knowledge, particularly knowledge of God. According to Aquinas the obligations to follow such fundamental goods flows from the self-evident natural law. The "Cardinal" virtues - prudence justice, courage and moderation enable an individual to achieve the fundamental goods that the natural law obligates one to follow.

Justice enables the achievement of the good of a well ordered society and therefore, business crimes are embedded in the sins opposed to commutative justice, which governs voluntary transactions. It consists of a readiness to provide equivalence in the exchange of goods. Business crimes in transactions thus can occur in four main ways:²³

- 1 By taking advantage of the buyer's dire need or ignorance to extort an unjust price
- 2 By failing to inform a buyer of a known product defect that

23 Cfr. Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-11 Q.77; Manuel Velasquez and F Neil Brady, op.cit. p. 87.

may impose unknown risks on the buyer or lower its true value and by subsequently failing to adequately compensate the buyer

- 3 By pursuing profit as an end which has no limit, instead of as a means for duly supporting oneself and family
- 4 By charging interest for money lent, a practice which constitutes usury,

Aquinas further discussed at some length the issue of private property and ownership. His views can be summed up under two main points.²⁴

- 1 Private ownership is not a natural right, but merely a conventional means of securing an orderly society
- 2 All property in its use is required by the natural law to serve the needs of humanity

The conventional right to ownership is therefore subject to the natural law requirement that all property should serve human needs in general. Thus, the surplus generated in a business transaction belongs not to the owner, but to the community, particularly to its needy. It follows logically that there is no sin in taking another's property in dire need or starvation.

Virtue Ethics

Any discussion on the ethical use of basic goods, or the pursuit of fundamental goods dictated by natural law, is incomplete without a due reference to virtue ethics. Virtue ethics descends from the classical Greek tradition, in which the cultivation of virtuous traits of character is viewed as morality's primary function. Virtue means in this context a disposition bred from an innate capacity properly trained and exercised.

In the Catholic teaching the moral life of the business person, as of all humans, is as important as the moral principles. In fact the emphasis is on the former. Fortunately, there is a recent focus on character-based approach to business leadership in organizations today.²⁵ Consequently, in a business environment one must look

²⁴ Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II - II, Q.66

²⁵ Cfr. for example, C. Walton, *The Moral Manager* (Cambridge, MA, 1988); of William and J N Houck, (eds.) *A Virtuous Life in Business* (Lanham, Maryland 1992)

not only on the moral principles guiding transactions, but also the inner dispositions of the decision makers such as enabling virtues of prudence, moderation, courage and justice. Equally important is to pay attention to the debilitating psychological states, particularly the vices including grudges, thoughts of revenge, traumatic influences of the past etc.

For business structures can have a profound influence on the moral character of human beings and a natural law ethic, with its emphasis on virtues and vices, is capable of providing a theoretical rationale for judging such structures. To the extent that social institutions in general, and business organizations in particular, promote alienation, envy, greed, and sloth, or undermine such virtues as prudence, courage, fairness, or integrity, they can be criticized from a natural law standpoint for promoting defective moral character.²⁶

Thus business organizations are criticized today for promoting selfishness, expediency, deception, short-sightedness and superficiality. The possibility of ethically motivated behaviour within business organizations, as they are currently structured, is perceived to be far remote.²⁷

Moreover, organizations are blamed for promoting excessive competition at the expense of the human virtues of cooperation and fairness.²⁸ The technically perfect hierarchical distribution of power in corporations encourages narcissism, authoritarianism, and ruthlessness instead of helpfulness, cooperation and commitment to the common good.

It is at this juncture that virtue ethics makes its presence prominent. Business ethics now looks back to Aristotle in order to revitalize the old idea of virtue. Aristotle insisted on a disposition that keeps the middle way between excess and deficiency. Virtue

26 Manuel Valesquez and F. Neil Brady, op.cit.p.94

27 Cfr. Robert Jackate, *Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers* (New York: Oxford University Press 1988)

28 Alfie Kohn, *No Contests: The Case against Competition* (New York, Houghton Muffin Co. 1986.

ethics now seems to have defined a more inclusive role for descriptive models of organizational processes.²⁹

A Question-mark on Pure Capitalism

The Catholic social teaching raises a radical question on the present-day capitalism. It believes that there are built-in systemic flaws in it and there are very few control mechanisms which can effectively contain them. For example, monopolies have always plagued capitalism. Since the system is completely based on competition, monopolies endanger the system itself.

Questions about chronic recessions and the resultant unemployment are equally important issues in this context. The whole area of inequalities and the manner in which the rich seem to get richer in the system as the poor have too little access to the capital needed to enter it is yet another systemic problem. Moreover, the relationship between power and accumulation of wealth is so strong that in an age of globalization no government, no international agency is in a position to check the eccentricities of big corporations. The Bhopal tragedy is just one example.

In a talk to a group of German industrialists sometime back, Cardinal Ratzinger³⁰ raised some of the most critical questions about the free market and its ideological roots. His first set of questions emphasized the contradiction between the claims of freedom and the deterministic nature of the market system. According to Ratzinger, it can, but does not work for the common good; it has nothing to offer for the non-economic development of the human person. In addition, free market does not help "unequal" nations which are forced to centralized economic controls. The inherent contradictions of capitalism have been a matter of dispute for a long time.

Catholic Perspectives for a Fruitful Dialogue

1. *A Solid Religious Foundation for Business Ethics*

Against a quick-fix solution to the complicated economic issues and ethical dilemmas in business as suggested by

29 K.Cyriac "Ethics in Teamwork", in S.K. Chakraborty and S.R. Chatterjee, op.cit. p.209

30 Cfr. *L'Osservatore Romano*, German ed. (Nov.29, 1985)

Utilitarian and Contractarian approaches, the Catholic social teaching provides a solid foundation for business ethics. Economic activity is a continuation of the process of creation. Human reason reflecting on human nature can discover how human beings should act in accord with the plan and work of the creator. Only such a partnership with God can control unbounded desire or greed, which is at the root of economic immoralities. If God is the real source of wealth, all human ownership is temporary, holders are just stewards, not masters. If wealth is God's creation, all have a stake in it; it is meant for all.

Are we humble enough to accept our total dependence on the grace of God for our economic welfare? We will then be ready to accept the responsibilities emanating therefrom and translating them into social life and business transactions.

2. *The Right to Property is not Unlimited*

Our right to ownership is neither absolute nor unconditional; it is instrumental, a means to an end. Wealth serves the purpose of survival, sustenance and enjoyment. However, there is a ceiling on the enjoyment of material goods. Wealth as the creation of God has a community dimension. It is all the more true for rich individuals, institutions and nations, because there are the less fortunate, right at their gate who lack the basic means for survival and sustenance. **Jesus** reminds us of this obligation through the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. Catholic social teaching thus strikes at the very root of unbridled capitalism, which feeds on human greed and pure self-seeking.

3. *Business Ethics should aim at Social Justice and Equitable Distribution of Wealth*

Abject poverty and extreme forms of luxury exist side-by-side today as the presence of slums and skyscrapers in the city of Bombay point out. Industry and business, particularly the private sector and the multinational corporations prefer to cater to the higher strata of society where the pot of gold sits, and seem to practically ignore the presence of the poor in the world.

The Catholic social teaching has been always insisting on the social responsibility of business. The Church's view is

diametrically opposed to that of some known world-economists like Milton Friedman who suggests that the sole purpose of doing business is making the maximum profit out of it.³¹ Again the Catholic teaching emphasizes that social responsibility is not merely a question of charitable actions, alms giving or social work. It is rather a matter of acknowledging the right of all people to participate in the economic life of society and making specifically the underprivileged part of the productive forces. Thus business systems have to be considered more as public trusts rather than private enterprises .

The Catholic Church goes a step further and states its *fundamental option* for the poor. Poverty in the world has to be perceived as an opportunity for the rich to bridge the gap between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

4. *Effective Management of business is a Social Responsibility*

If wealth is God's creation and is meant for the common purpose, good management implies economizing not only the use of the scarce resources but also containing the incredible waste of money and time. The present-day business enterprises are rooted on a consumerist ideology that leads both to high levels of production and waste. No wonder, the developed countries are thrusting heavy burden on the sustainability of the eco-systems through environmental pollution and dumping even toxic wastes in the developing countries under the pretext of technology transfer and development aid.

The Catholic perspectives suggest that the resources of nature have to be carefully used for human needs and not to be exploited or plundered by human greed. Nature has to be protected, so that it can protect us.

5. *Guidelines for Human Resource Management*

The Catholic social teaching offers a carefully selected set of guidelines for managing the human resources. Above all, it

31 "The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Profits", *The New York Times Magazine* (September 13, 1970)

emphasizes worker's dignity and insists on the worker's family security. Work is a necessity and a calling. Hence worker dignity is of paramount concern to those managing people and all personnel policy decisions. The Church would never accept the doctrine of subservience, making the human beings a means of production. Priority is given to labour rather than to capital in the process of production.

If human work serves the dual purpose of provision of a means of survival and realization of self-worth, employers have to address themselves to both these needs. They should ensure reasonable comfort to the employees. Family health care and retirement security are equally important as employee benefits which have to be considered along with favourable work conditions and job design.³²

Corporate downsizing has posed a great challenge to the Catholic social teaching in this era of economic globalization. The Church sees it not merely as an inevitable consequence of the technological innovations but also as an error of economism, which reduces human work to just another factor of production. Therefore, downsizing may be viewed more as an exigency of finance capital that recognizes no limit to the logic of profit taking than the result of applications of the newest technologies. As a result, the church argues that "the capital produced by the innovations made possible in a knowledge-based economy be shared equitably among all those who have had a hand in producing it"³³.

Catholic Social teaching does not offer a comprehensive economic plan for the future, but the values propounded by it can help build a better and more just future for all on our planet. It is the responsibility of the business community to work on the above mentioned details, with the seriousness they deserve.

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32 Michael A. Zigarelli, "Catholic Social Teaching and the Employment Relationship", *Journal of Business Ethics* 12 (1993) pp. 75-82

33 Dennis P McCann, "Catholic Social Teaching in an Era of Economic Globalization", *Business Ethics, Quarterly*, Vol.7, No.2 (1997) pp.57-70

Ethics in Business Education

Paul Fernandes

Business Education can be imparted by business institutions or educational institutions. The one that is imparted by the former tends to be more prescriptive while the other seems to be more descriptive. Business Education is important because it shapes the nature of the society in which we live and business operates. Basically it should enable a person to build his character. All the same the discipline is yet to establish itself on par with other subjects in Business Education, especially in India. Developing applied ethics is a significant practical contribution. Business Education can make in this context. Further, true ethics, notes the author, should be open to and guided by the "highest good", God. Otherwise, what one develops will be aesthetics, not ethics. Fr. Paul Fernandes S.J. is professor of Business Ethics at Xavier Labour Relations Institute (XLRl).

Great institutions and great people, have their ethics — the supreme good they desire — constantly before their eyes. The pursuit of the good they seek requires 'education' and learning, mastery and ultimately service. Education is the first step leading to mastery. We can only express the hope that it indeed fulfills the expectation of service. But how unwavering or strong our hope for ethics in business education can be for 'little people' who want to be great and be part of the great institutions? To find that out these following few lines have been written. My hope is that it may lead to some discussion in relevant circles.

Business education, may be imparted to future managers by educational institutions that are independent of the business institutions or it may be imparted by the business institution itself to which they join. The ethics by which business managers conduct their business is shaped by the business institution they eventually join and through which they serve the public. The two set-ups are so distinct that the attitudes at the two places would be remarkably different. Business education offered by an educational institution is 'basic' in nature without many 'ifs and buts'. Business education offered by a business institution is more 'focused' in terms of the

business that institution is engaged in and its needs. The key to understanding the difference is in the respective methods employed. Business education provided by an educational institution explicitly does not *prescribe* specific moral, ethical activities or values. It aims at providing a *descriptive* method to describe moral behavior and explain its workings. On the other hand, a business corporation requires prescriptive specifications of certain behaviors to enable the right or normal conduct of business affairs. An educational institution must explain to the students how human ethic operates, what actions and beliefs human beings have called 'good', 'bad' and 'sinful' or 'evil'.

The ways in which ethics is applied in business and business education determines the nature of that business in society. One should be surprised by business which operates outside of business education. Business education is a scarce resource, and ethics resources in business education are rare. Their development is important because it determines the nature of the society in which we live and business operates. The ethic of business education is clearly determined by the purpose which it serves in society or social utility. Business activities appear to be good either in themselves or because they make human interaction and relationships not only possible but enjoyable and profitable. Business education enables a person to build his character, develop virtues and a successful life. However, it is practical utility rather than idealism that drives almost all business education. For ethics to be acceptable a teacher may have to emphasize both the practical utility and ethical idealism. One has to be clear about ultimate principles and values in life, including business. Otherwise one invites a measure of absurdity in one's thought and actions.

Missing Links

It is possible to view the entire society as engaged in business. For example, 'economy' or 'economics' takes such a view. In addition, it is possible to view the entire culture, meaning all 'potential' persons, those that have gone before us and those that are yet to see the light of day, as engaged in business already now. These are considerations of such great importance, that we must be careful in our desire to define or assess ethics in business education. Business institutions and business educational institutions do not

take an adequate view of the social or cultural dimension. Ethics in business education suffers because of lack of adequate understanding of the social and cultural dimension. Those that impart social and cultural aspects of ethics are certainly better placed and equipped. The cultural aspect that is recognized here is one that , pertains to future generations of people and not the popular song and dance pop culture. We must have something to say about 'potential' people, a concern which is presently lacking in most studies of culture. With the social and cultural dimension included, 'business' would appear to be more a cultural and social phenomenon, rather than a private affair. For example, it is typical to view production, trade, marketing, advertising, etc. as business. Such a view is narrow, even if one extends it to include management and more specifically, information technologies and systems, human resources development and management. It neglects and blinds our focus on people. All of these aspects can be thought of as 'culture' - business culture - requiring us to determine the nature of that culture through research and development of ethics.

Even if we extend business to include services, it continues to neglect ethics by its lack of focus on people. For example, it has been acknowledged that 'services' is a core sector of business. It includes all types of services, banking, insurance, health, education, etc. Problems that arise in different service sectors are unique to that sector. Hence we should expect ethics in, say, medical practice to be different from that of educational practice. In general, our attitudes in the 'campuses' where business education or management education takes place to be remarkably different from our attitudes in the actual field of practice. We could argue that business education is different from business practice and hence expect that ethics in business to be different from ethics in business education. We could also argue that ethics in business education to be different from ethics in medical education, because these are different fields of inquiry and applicability. We could extend these arguments to banking, to insurance, to financial services, to law, to architecture, to medicine, to accounting, to media, to engineering, to agriculture, to any provision of public goods and private goods. Ethics applies to all business sectors enabling us to determine the nature of business. Ethical business is good business by definition of being 'ethical'. Hence those businesses and countries which

have developed applied ethics which determines the nature of their business can certainly be expected to do better. While we are not obliged to follow blindly, we are obliged to ask the critical question, what is good business. We have to describe what any good business is in relation to the society in which it operates. And secondly, we must be mindful of future generations while determining the nature of business. We must aim to provide future generations at least as good or better future than we ourselves had. Does our definition or list of examples of business include, first and foremost the cultural dimension of 'potential' people and secondly the social dimension of 'actual' people? Thus ethics in business education should enable us to move away from the 'hypothetical' nature of business and business education.

It is not very clear how ethics in business education should include social and cultural concerns. Reason alone is clearly insufficient for ethics in business education. Business situations abound which call for a moral, ethical response which is deeply *emotional*. Many ethical intuitions have been developed from *trauma* experiences of people so that future traumatic experiences are prevented and *therapeutic* experiences are imparted to people who suffer. Humanly speaking, more is required in terms of personality development, developing (emotional/analytic) intelligence, and understanding love that provides a vision of unity of all life. Ethics in business education is in crisis, not because of the limited exposure that students of business have — through just one course in business ethics. Ethics in business education is in crisis because it cannot provide all that it takes for one to be an ethical (good) human being. It can only play a supportive or midwifery role. Ethics in business education is in crisis because it does not attend to determining the nature of business in society or community. Ethics in business education is in crisis because all the other courses eliminate ethics by according total attention to 'speciality' considerations in their respective areas. Ethics in business education is in crisis because of its 'positivistic' (pseudo-scientific) foundations balanced with 'modern' psychology.

Developing Applied Ethics

Developing applied ethics is an integral part of business education. It must start from 'an' experience, develop it through 'story line' (rule), enabling men and women to realize what is unethical

and what is ethical because of its effects on all those who are involved either directly or indirectly. Only then can the applied ethic be developed in this manner, find acceptance in the business for which it was developed and become an issue of ethics policy for a company. That is the ultimate success one can aim for in developing an applied ethic in business education. One can here take comfort from the fact that the rules for conducting business, likely to have arisen in this manner before these were extended and generalized. This process of developing an applied ethic in business education, is indeed a professionally guided process. One could also argue that once applied ethics has been developed in this manner, these may later on become generally accepted norms or law. This development by which applied ethic takes on the force of law is more complex, but nevertheless an important input into deciding which rules should become rules of law. In particular, we could critically examine what is the ethic behind the rules, especially rules that have the force of law in business. Any business rule or practice developed in this manner, remains in the realm of applied ethics until it is legislated or proclaimed or declared as the law. What we have here is a creative process, that should go well with the general climate of creativity in business education. It alone provides the basis for 'innovation' in business law. Many corporations have developed applied ethic when they formulate 'credos' or 'codes' that define desirable action and are seen as necessary to conduct normal human or business affairs. For example, accounting or auditing codes include 'integrity', 'objectivity' (truthfulness), 'public trust', 'professional judgments' and so on. Advertising or marketing codes include banning false or exaggerated misleading statements, unfair competition practices, special offers, etc. The chief executives of several major business corporations from around the world, in their Business Round Table have provided models of codes and credos and applied ethics which they have developed to govern their corporations. They recommend that corporations adopt written codes of conduct and well-defined corporate policies regarding executive compensation, fair play for employees' freedom of expression, and product quality. They recognize that corporate codes may do more than any other effort to be an ethical business.

All this goes to show that applied ethics developed in the corporate sector finds its way into business education. Institutions engaged in business education must also develop applied ethics in the respective area of curricula and must either have their students make a professional promise or have them tested for applied ethics in the area of competence in which they specialize. This step appears controversial and is not done. It is however, a necessity for a country like ours to weed out widespread corruption, bribery and extortion, mediocrity, substandard quality, 'customer harassment', general lack of excellence.

The development of applied ethics encounters a familiar problem. Ethics is not only to be conceived as merely any good, but more importantly as the 'highest' human good. As the highest human good, the experience of God is a must for any recognition or appreciation of the good. If an ethical person were not in contact with God, we would indeed have doubts on the ethical system, because it would be more proper to call such a system aesthetic. It may be beautiful, but it lacks the 'highest' good, God. There are two senses of the term good, the aesthetic and the ethic. The aesthetic sense may depend on the eyes of the beholder, but the ethical is always open to accepting the higher good and the highest good, God our Father.

Ethics which is open to the 'highest' good, is a welcome sign. In business education such an ethic is clearly very rare. The rest of the ethic in business education is not really ethic, but has the appearance of ethic. The descriptive enterprise of ethics in business education fails to provide necessary developmental focus, misses out on the social and cultural dimensions of life. All that ethics in business education provides is aesthetic or pleasing understanding of business mores (meaning customs, institutions, habits that provide for a limited social living) and practice. The business institution is better equipped to do that than a business educational institution. The development enterprise, meaning the development of applied ethics, being a professionally guided process fails because of the lack of foundational experience beyond the 'apriori' knowledge. It is not possible for a professor to guide such large number of students personally in their attempts to develop applied ethics. Imparting of ethics developed elsewhere has its grave limitations. It is no wonder that chief executives prefer the 'prescriptive' approach to business

ethics. However, these prescriptions are human precepts and merit our attention only as human precepts, aesthetic precepts. Their purpose is clearly to make business beautiful and attractive. They have every right to do so. But, for the few reasons mentioned here and many more reasons can be added, ethics in business education falls short of being an ethic. The business institution clearly takes the prescriptive approach to ethics in business education and the business educational institution takes the descriptive approach to ethics in business education. One hopes that greater attention be given to the process of development of ethics, because on it depends the nature of society in which we live and the culture of that society. If the brilliant mind do not devote some time to the ethical questions that so deeply affect our social and cultural life, who else will? We need to guide that process, not only in business education but in all types of education.

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The Business Ethics Course at XLRI

Cyriac Kottayarikil

XLRI, Xavier Labour Relations Institute, owned and run by the Jamshedpur Jesuit Society, is a premier Management School, on par with the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). During the past fifty years of its existence, it has trained about 5000 corporate managers currently working all over the world. The author, as already noted, professor at XLRI for the past 16 years, writes here about his experience of teaching Ethics at this institute and thus puts the reader in closer contact with the 'practicalities' of teaching the subject.

XLRI, Jamshedpur proudly proclaims that it is the first management school in the country to introduce and sustain a capstone course in Business Ethics.

Thanks to a group of adventurous and highly committed American Jesuit missionaries, and to their dedicated followers, XLRI today can legitimately claim number one position at least in two important aspects of management education, namely its ethics orientation and the prevalent campus culture of positive interpersonal interactions. The mission statement of this Institute is loud and clear.

While informality, flexibility, humanness, and *esprit de corps* are the hallmarks, growth and development of the whole person with integrity and ingenuity are the 'summum bonum' of the culture in XLRI.¹

The curriculum at XLRI took a definite turn in 1953 when it was recognized as a full-fledged management school, and ever since ethics is an essential ingredient in all its training programmes.

Exactly 30 years later, I took over the responsibility of handling this course. I have now completed teaching 48 batches and about 2000 Alumni have gone through this course with me.

1. XLRI Prospects, 2000, p.3

At the initial stage of my career at XLRI there was a bit of confusion about this course and lack of clarity in direction. Business ethics was not a classroom priority at that time in our country. Even in the US it was just picking up momentum. At present, however, business ethics is a well accepted and appreciated course at XLRI. What follows is a summary of my experiences of handling this subject for the last 16 years with care and awe on the one side, and some apprehensions and worries on the other.

The Unique Characteristics of the Course at XLRI

1. XLRI believes that management education embodies not just a pedagogical process, but more importantly some practical directions in decision-making. Therefore, such a training is ethically not neutral. Consequently, business ethics is a necessary ingredient in it.
2. Teaching of ethics essentially involves sharing of an ethos, a set of basic human values like honesty, truthfulness, compassion, loyalty and respect, by people who lead by example, and not just instruct others.
3. Business ethics course at XLRI is never made a slave to any particular ideology or methodology. It is true that an Instructor cannot hide his preferences; but then one can always state them as personal views.
4. We deliberately avoid encroaching into the students freedom and responsibility to develop their own sense of right and wrong. There is no brainwashing, no dictating of anybody's ethics.
5. The focus of this course is on the individual in organizations - managers in their day-to-day functioning, and not on the corporation as a body. Personal integrity is the pivot on which the whole discussion turns.
6. At XLRI business ethics is always a 3-credit compulsory capstone course. I do admit that there is the danger of some people being present in a compulsory course per force. Yet we think that ethics is so important a subject, that it cannot be simply left to the will of the students, many of them being quite often too materialistic and hedonistic in their approach and to some extent immature at least immature in their behaviour, not in their personality development.

- 7 As this course progresses, we raise more questions than we look for answers to the classic questions repeatedly raised. Many of them remain unanswered even to the end of the course.

Questions at the Entry-Point

I usually face a few standard questions right at the beginning of the course. They are:

1. What is after all ethics? Is there a definition that can be commonly agreed upon? Is it not relative to individuals, groups, communities, etc.? The obvious implication is that there cannot be any universally applicable ethical norms.
2. What is the point of being good in a bad world? No Managers can afford to be saints in a bad, mad, ugly world out there. An honest businessman never will be an honest man in business. Nice guys always finish last!
3. Is not ethics the concern of the top management? They are the planners and policy makers. If they decide to be ethical, it works out to be so. Otherwise there is no point in trying it out.
4. Will not the legal system take care of the wrong-doers? Let us not encroach upon someone else's domain!

We discuss the implications of these questions extensively, and the class finally comes to an understanding that business can neither operate in a *laissez-faire* environment nor will the mad struggle for the largest portion of the national cake help anyone except for destroying everyone's share.

The Focus of the Course

The business ethics course at XLRI emphasizes a healthy combination of moral awareness and ethical reasoning. The insistence is on a responsible self and a character ethic. This is all the more important today because education in general appears to

be built on a personality cult² among the students. Accordingly, success becomes more a function of personality and public image, skills and techniques. This approach, though manipulative and even deceptive in itself, is unfortunately quite appealing to the younger generation.

Management education should base itself on a more solid foundation. Therefore, the XLRI course appeals to the human side of the enterprise and insists also on the so called soft skills in management. "The corporate climber has to find his heart", declared the famous Harvard psychoanalyst, Michael Maccoby over two decades ago.³ I find this appeal today much more applicable to the Indian context. Training in business ethics should aim at a total personality development of the students. It should be built around a down-to-earth character ethic, and not on an inflated personality cult.

Rationality and Relationality are two equally important and mutually complementing elements of ethics. Business students should learn to consider their privileged status as a means to serve the society, especially the underprivileged in this country. Ethical management of business is in the final analysis, one of the best ways of serving the public. It is the responsibility of the management schools to help students understand and appreciate the importance of the heart traits in their decision-making. A pure cognitive analysis of the sensory data per se cannot evolve a human decision. The XLRI course aims at training the students, above all, as human beings with a solid character base.

However, there are some apprehensions about this approach. First of all, there are experts, who claim that a radical change in the character, that is already formed, is impossible. The students come to the Institute with a particular mindset and with some clear objectives. How far can one change their attitude or modify their behaviour? There are also people who think that a character-based ethics course might reduce the assertiveness of future managers, while industry expects them to be doers and achievers, rather than philosophers.

2 Stephen R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People : Restoring the Character Ethic*, (Simon & Schuster, 1992)

3 Fortune (Dec. 1976)

I do agree that ethics sees modesty as a desirable virtue and to some extent students may be a bit subdued in their activities as a result of some serious discussions on ethics. However, here the question is not so much about short term gains at the expense of principles as the very foundation of business operations in themselves.

Students' Reactions

As business ethics is acknowledged as an essential part of XLRI curriculum, our students accept it as they do with most other courses. We consider it as a foundation course, very important in the training of future managers.

At the initial stage there are some doubts and apprehensions expressed in the classroom by the students. They are more concerned, about the applicability of the content of this course, the difficulty in changing one's own set orientations, lack of consensus on basic principles and above all the process of student evaluation in the class as if one is getting a grade for one's ethical orientation. However, these doubts are dispelled in the first session itself.

The large majority of our students come to the class with an open mind and a positive outlook. A handful of them are there per force and therefore become a bottleneck in the classroom discussions, now and then.

The obvious question raised by many students on the business ethics course is about its practical utility. What are we going to gain out of it? Some go to the extent of worrying about the negative impact of this course on their career prospects. They feel that at least some companies consider a strong ethical positioning not so much as a strength, but as a liability.

I take the feedback given by students on a prescribed form as one indicator of the effectiveness of the course. XLRI uses a common feedback form for all the courses taught. Variables like "interest generated by the instructor" or "communication skills of the instructor", as given in the present form may vary from course to course, instructor to instructor. Business Ethics as a course cannot be compared with, for example, a hard core marketing course. There is the danger that students evaluate the courses in terms of their practical utility or on the ROI. Here Business Ethics as a course may take the back seat, as far as such evaluation goes.

Maturity level of the students also plays an important role in their receptivity of and response to this course. I have found our evening students who are practising managers with several years of work experience to their credit, more enthusiastic and involved in classroom discussions than our residential students. Even in the written feedback there is a perceptible difference. I found the students who are coming straight from the colleges less responsive to and more casual about the discussions on business ethics.

Limitations and Suggestions for Improvement

1. Business Ethics course at XLRI is not yet fully integrated with other courses. Many of the professors from other disciplines like marketing, finance and personnel may make reference to the ethical implications as and when required. But a serious discussion about them is always transferred on to the ethics class. Here the question arises: What is the best way of imparting ethics to business students? This matter deserves serious thought and further analysis.

Ideally, I would suggest a foundation course in the first year of training the MBAs preferably during the 3rd term, and its integration into different functions by the professors concerned in the 2nd year.

2. Sometimes an ethical will seems to be absent from some departments and individuals. There have been isolated cases where some professors suggested to ignore ethics, when it comes to the bottomline! Students get confused when the messages from the professors are contradictory.
3. We have not been able to incorporate our Indian traditional values into the business ethics course, although Prof Chakraborty's books and articles⁴ are used at different stages, for discussion and debate. As a result there is often a kind of mismatch between the "Western" management tools and the Indian cultural conditioning. Consequently students are often led to a kind of value conflict in themselves.

4 Prof S K Chakraborty, Director of the Management Centre for Human Values, Indian Institute of Management, Calcutta is considered to be the Indian Guru of Business Ethics.

At present our management education is busy inflating the personality cult in the students. There is a subtle glorification of individual selfishness in it. After all the students have to become aggressive, result-oriented achievers. Within this context it becomes difficult for them to appreciate the importance of the soft skills and the human virtues in management.

Therefore the curriculum of management education needs a thorough revision. Its emphasis should be on the total personality development of the future managers rather than cultivating their brains or polishing their social skills. The students should learn to balance their ambitions with due consideration for the needs and views of others. And it is here that the church and the christian theological studies enter the field of business ethics. They can render an invaluable service to the professional Institutes in training managers.

4. As of now, business ethics courses do not include any hands-on experience. Most of the students are coming from the affluent middle and upper classes and have lived in an elitist protected environment. Their understanding of the social issues and problems is rather scant and abstract. Consequently, they are not able to understand the seriousness of most of the social problems and the urgency of their solutions, especially in a country like ours.

What can be done in this regard is a matter of serious debate. The American business schools are now incorporating what is known as "service learning" or "community involvement projects" into the Business curriculum⁵. Its practicality may further be explored into, and one may have to look into more options and possibilities in this direction.

5. Industry does not always give a clear message to the students. Even if companies try to endorse an ethically positive outlook through their mission statements or codes of conduct or PR

5 Cfr. E. Zlotkowski, "Opportunity for All: Linking Service-Learning and Business Education," *J. of Business Ethics* 15 (1996) 5-19

exercises, the experience of many of our students during their summer projects is not very encouraging in this matter.

Industry and business leaders need to give clear signals to the students regarding their ethical positioning.

Concluding Remarks

My experience of teaching business ethics at XLRI was not very encouraging at the beginning. Several factors contributed to it, including the general perception and overall attitude towards ethics in business. At that time Industry did not quite welcome it. Many students felt that ethics was simply pushed into their mouth against their will.

The contextual factors changed slowly. Ethics gained respectability in the management curriculum. At present the student reactions at XLRI are quite positive and I am hopeful that ethics will be on a par with any other popular course in the near future.

Here I would like to underline one point. In teaching business ethics the personality of the instructor plays a decisive role. Perhaps *the* most important characteristic required of an instructor is his/her credibility along with an ability to create a conducive institutional setting and organizational culture. I endorse the view of Garg and Parikh that "the most significant aspect of the MBA is his willingness to surrender his earlier beliefs, even in matters of ethics and values."⁶

I have seen a lot of good will among our students. Most of them are open to different ideas and even to different values. However, what they detest most is dishonesty and hypocrisy on the part of the instructors. One should not try to play games with them, taking refuge under scriptures and traditions. Most of the students are outright realists in their attitude and approach. They respect people who are honest to themselves. Therefore all who teach or aspire to teach business ethics should take this simple but crucial message to heart -- be honest to self

I conclude this write-up with the narration of a small incident. Sometime back one of my students, an alumnus of 1993 batch came to me. Let us call him Sai Kumar. Sai had visited me several times

6. *Young Managers at the Crossroads : The Trishanku Complex*, (Sage, 1993), P.180

before. But this time his appearance and attire were that of a typical *sanyasi*. For 3 years he was doing some kind of social work among a particular group of semi-skilled workers in South India. He wanted to do more of it and as a preparation for it he was entering the Sree Rama Dasa Ashram near Trivandrum. He would spend 3 years there in meditation and prayer, but would continue coordinating the work he was doing. Actually he had come to XLRI this time to seek the blessings of his Professors. As he was leaving my room, he told me, "Father, you people helped me to look for meaning in my life. I am slowly finding it within me. Thank you very much for your support. "

Today I look back at him and tell myself: "Sai, you surprised me."

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Ethical Challenges to Business Praxis Today

John B. Chethimattam

Business praxis has come to a crisis because of the challenges presented by what is characterised as capitalist ethics. Communists, Gandhians and Christians have their own solutions to the problems. "Only the will of the people developed through correct political consciousness", says the author, "can build a community of adult citizens both on the national level and in the world in general". Dr. John B. Chethimattam is now the Director of San Thome Catholic Dialogue Centre, Kanyakumari.

The Problem

Today we are in the post-modern age when the assumptions of Modernity that were taken for granted from the sixteenth century are generally rejected. Its pillars, principally the science based technology seen as the paragon of human achievement, the dominant role of organizing reason, maximization of profit as the sole business ideal and the idea of infinite progress have lost their ground. With the fall of the Berlin wall and the break up of the Soviet Republic the Marxist model of the distribution of property and jobs is assumed to have failed. But the *ethical* validity of Capitalism which was the main thrust of modernity is also being questioned. Still, even some Catholic theologians consider inevitable the globalization of Western Market Economy and the technological culture fostered by it, and the formation of a world community on its lines inexorable. But the question is what are the ethical trends that challenge this business praxis today.

The Capitalist Ethics

Business praxis came to a crisis and faced the greatest challenge in recent centuries by what is characterized by Max Weber as the Protestant ethic, which gave incentive to Capitalism. It was a side-effect of the Protestant revolution which freed peoples from the

traditional control of the Church and gave them liberty to pursue economic ventures. It was based on the Jewish idea that if one was economically prosperous it was a sign that he had done something good and that for reward God had blessed him with material well being. Poverty and misery were seen as a punishment from God. Capitalism is defined as an economic system the basis of which includes a society of free individuals, the private ownership of productive equipment and resources, a money medium of exchange and opportunity for the 'individual to maximize his income -- profit, interest or wages - by entering into free contracts arising from rational choice in a free, competitive market. According to Max Weber human rationality included six components namely purposiveness, calculability, self-disciplined employment, teleological and logical consistency and systematic organization. This process of rationalization leaves one free to dominate and organize the material resources to his own advantage and form the state system that permitted and encouraged the exercise of such freedom.. But Marxist critique pointed out that such rationalization of all things and persons as commodities to be bought and sold for a profit lead to a devaluation of all world-views. All social relations are reified into commodities and bartered on that basis, thus reducing all human communication to commerce. So Marxism went to the opposite extreme and argued for the abolition of all private property, distribution of goods held in common to each one according to one's needs and jobs and services according to each one's capacity. This again had the same effect of reifying all human relations denying everyone's freedom. Humans are rational administrators of the material wealth of the world intended for the benefit of all God's children.

Crisis in Economic Theory

Material wealth of the world has to be managed and administered so as to serve the needs of all. Here the science of economics has an important role to play. But though it is assumed that business praxis is regulated by economics which is a neutral positivist science, today its very relevance in the matter is being questioned. The first reason for this lack of credibility of economics is its failure to produce

a theory of social justice. Through the years tools of economics have been perfected so much as to make the economic theory so neutral that even some Marxists have thought of applying tools of market even to socialism. The unreliability of long-term forecasting has rendered some economic theories actually irrelevant. Even in the short-term forecasting there are so many factors and influences are taken as constants so that economic theory fails to give proper signals at the proper time. As Robert Heilbroner states, "conventional economics deals with economy as if it were only a mechanism for allocating goods and services and overlooks the fact that the economy is also a mechanism for allocating privileges and power"¹. Economics is in crisis because it lacks political power. While politics deals with the question of coercive political power, economics ignores questions of economic power and deals with demand and supply, costs and benefits, commodities and their values, incomes and expenditures and the like.

Economic rationality which is supposed to be based on self-interest generates simple greed, an atmosphere of greed and a simple rat race of one against all and all against one. Unable to sort out labour input in terms of the social role of the human, modern theories pervert human sciences. The economic theories about labour which require minimization of its use as an input into productivity are at the source of unemployment that puts millions out of work. Human nature is dialectically competitive and cooperative. But economic theories concentrate on competition and neglect cooperation entirely. The most serious criticism of economics from social scientists is that economists have built their theories on the basis of the behaviour of the markets and not the behaviour of human beings.

The Gandhian Theory of Trusteeship

Mahatma Gandhi views the field of economics from the Indian ideal of renunciation of all finite things in order to realize the Divine as the one Self of all, the One-alone-without-a-second.² First of all

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1. Robert Heilbroner and Arthur Ford, *Is Economics Relevant*, California 19 1, p.xvi
 2. *cf Trusteeship, the Gandhian Alternative*, ed. J.D- Setti, New Delhi: Gandhi Peace Foundation, 1986. "Trusteeship and the Crisis in Economic Theory", pp. 76-95

he rejects both on principle and from experience the idea of a pure economic human. An economic theory divorced from political and moral considerations fails to respond to the human reality. All modern economic theories are deterministic and restrict the area of human freedom. They are based not on real needs but often artificially created human wants, leading to a rat race that debases human beings. So they lead to one-sided and unrealistic relations leading to inevitable conflicts. Unlimited wants, greed, fear, alienation etc., arise from the capitalist or socialist system of property relations. So people can enjoy material goods only by radically renouncing them, and holding them only as trustees. This is the sole universalizable means of intelligent generation and use of wealth as well as of its continuous redistribution. Gandhi finds this as a corollary of his principle of non-violence. Other means of distribution of wealth either through capitalist competition or Marxist coercion will create fear, resentment, alienation and violence. Gandhi thinks that this principle of trusteeship is practical since it does not require everyone to undertake it all at once. Enlightened individuals could initiate the process divesting themselves of what is unnecessary and becoming trustees of what they have to own by necessity. But the problem with the Gandhian trusteeship theory is that it never worked. Left to the free decision of individuals few will choose renunciation, and the few that will do so will not make any significant impact in the business world or the human society. If the world of material wealth is of no significance whatever with regard to the real transcendental self of the human, why bother about it?³

Christian Perception of the Business World

The Christian view of the business world starts from the understanding that the world of material wealth has great significance for the development of the human person and of the human society. The task of human beings is not merely to escape this world but rather to build this world into God's Kingdom and to lead all things to their final goal. Human beings are gifted with reason and freedom to build up their life in this material world. The Creator's command to the First Parents to make the earth fruitful is actually an injunction to build up their own self-respect by earning their living by work and

3. cf. *Ibidem* Devadatta Dabholkar..... "Trusteeship: A Blind Alley or a Break-through" pp. 123-127

also provide for other creatures by maintaining the ecology and fruitfulness of the earth. The material world is for creative human beings in a way an extension of their own bodies, which are the expression and extension of their spiritual selves. Only by assuring themselves of a sufficient supply of material things for the maintenance of their individual and social needs can human beings secure their freedom. The human task is to make this world hospitable to all God's children. Poverty by itself is an evil and by his efforts the human has to eliminate it. To be poor by one's own laziness is a sin. But the poor are said to be blessed only in the sense that material wealth is not the be all and end all of life, but only a means towards the attainment of the Kingdom of God. If one chooses to be poor through voluntary renunciation of wealth that is a free and conscious choice of the Kingdom.

So the first principle of business ethics is that one should not strive to acquire material wealth out of greed or sheer competition with others, but because it is one's duty to earn one's living by honest and hard work and also to contribute a fair share for the welfare of others. Today the idea that profit is the only thing that matters in business is generally discarded. Business like any profession is a service rendered to others. So its success is measured not by the amount of money one makes but by the quality of the service rendered. Here honesty is the best policy and profit is the service received in return from others. While Capitalism tried to increase productivity by appealing to human weaknesses of greed, pride, vanity, self-deceit, selfishness, aggressiveness, envy, resentment and possessiveness, Christianity appeals to the sense of duty and each one's obligation to make this world God's Kingdom, hospitable to all God's children.

Secondly it is true that inequalities in income and wealth can never be fully eliminated within countries and among countries. Enforced redistribution of income and wealth often benefit middle income groups than the poor and penalize the more productive groups in society. But the present condition in which more than one third of humanity wallows in abject poverty is a sin, caused by the greed of some to exploit others. Instead of being a matter of credit to the industry and cleverness of those who amass wealth depriving others of basic sustenance it is a disgrace to the business pursuit of humanity itself. Even the market economy that seeks to attain an

equitable distribution of wealth without coercion and outside pressure can succeed only when there is a certain parity among the participants. Exploitation reaches a point of self-defeat. A business venture which denies a fair share of the profit to workers will sooner or later lose their trust and will break down.

The strange phenomenon today is that both the Capitalists and the Communists want to keep the poor in their present poverty. The poor constitute the source of cheap labour for the capitalists and for the communists a disgruntled poor is their vote-bank. Both these groups exploit the religious and cultural differences to the *status quo*. But the growth of political democracy and the growth of personal political liberties should help enable people to see through the selfish designs of such groups and work towards the development of all the people. Only the will of the people developed through correct political consciousness can build a community of adult citizens both on the national level and in the world in general.

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Book Reviews

Liberation Theologies on Shifting Grounds, A Clash of Socio-Economic and Cultural Paradigms, ed. By G.De Schrijver, Leuven University Press, 1998, pp.xi; 453.

The book contains papers of a symposium organized by the Center for Liberation Theology, Faculty of Theology, K U Leuven. It discusses the paradigm shift in third world theologies of liberation, from their earlier focus on socio-economic conditions and problems to an analysis of the broader cultural conditions of human life today. The first part, pp 3-84, is a discussion paper by the editor, the second part, pp. 85-232, responses from seven liberation theologians, and the third part (pp 233-436) papers offered to assess the various points raised in the symposium. The assumption is that Liberation Theology which originated in Latin America in the 1970's and held world attention for over "quarter of a century is now practically dead since the fall of the Soviet Republic, assumed to be the model for the Paradise of the Proletariat. With the removal of the Berlin Wall liberation theologians realized that no short term utopic solution to the socio-economic slavery of vast masses is possible. G.De Schrijver S.J., the editor, says that when LT submitted to the parameters dictated by Rome it lost its clout. The scope of the Vatican pressure on liberation theologians was to shut out completely the analysis inspired by Marxism of the social situation and obliterate even its memory. LT has succumbed and no new ideas are coming out of it. With post-modernity world situation itself has radically changed. The symposium seems to have been intended practically as a post-mortem of the Liberation Theology phenomenon.

G.De Schrijver gives a detailed analysis of the prevailing Post-Modern mentality in which the assumptions of Modernity which Liberation Theology somewhat accepted have been generally

abandoned. The five pillars of Modernity, confidence in science - based technology, the sovereignty of the nation state, bureaucratic rationality, the ideal of profit maximization and belief in never ending steady progress can no longer support a world system. Liberationist idea was for the exploited poor to replace the capitalists in the domination of the world. Gutierrez does not question the disruption of traditional societies and their cultures through the developmental projects undertaken by the capitalist countries. His only complaint was that they did not work. Liberationists fell back on traditional myths like an alternative utopic society and determination of consciousness by social forms of life.

As Francois Lyotard and others point out, in Post-modernity universal type of science and its cognitive apparatus of representative truth have expired. In its place an indefinite number of meaning generating agencies have come up. Meaning is produced locally, and truth boils down to efficiency and competitiveness in the market. With the explosion of mass media a plurality of world views have come to the fore and people find it hard to commit themselves to a single and exclusive truth. The grand stories that grounded universal theories have disappeared. Today Marxism is being ridiculed for maintaining the possibility of a single world order for all. As A.Griddens, Ulrich Beck and Hans Jonas point out it is Modernity itself that has come of age, criticizing the traditional belief about the move of history towards a definite end and the ideology of progress. A scientific theory holds only until it is falsified. Scientists feel responsible also for the unintended negative side effects that unavoidably accompany even the most brilliant scientific achievements. Entangled in a web of insoluble riddles people realize that they are living in a society with manufactured risks. So the catchword in ethics is responsibility. An apparatus of production whose steady growth was indispensable to cater to the needs of a consumerist society is getting out of control, and one has to be guided by a "heuristic fear" and the principle of uncertainty. The new categorical imperative is: "Act in such a way that the effects of your action are compatible with the permanence of human life." But authors like I. Wallerstein point out the present globalization of culture is just a capitalist ploy for greater profit by exploiting the market and imposing the Western culture on everyone. How long can local cultures resist the trend of 'McDonaldization'?

Post-modernity has transformed both space and time. From a conception traditionally tied to the life stages of the human and the seasons, time has become merely clock-time, mathematical calculation of motion, and space itself is empty disembodied from social relations. "We find ourselves in a situation where on a world scale there is only one center of economic power left: the 'total' or 'global' market... The very nation states, also in the Old World, seem to have been stripped of the momentum they previously had." (p.424). If governments fail to live up to the rule of world capitalism, they are threatened with exclusion from 'the benefits' of the global market. LT has not responded sufficiently to the globalization of the market. Hence there is a paralysis and the common people hardly find comfort in Liberation Theology's stock answers. The New World Order has stifled the enthusiasm for change, which is indicated by "the mushrooming of charismatic communities that in the midst of a heartless world, wager on emotional consolation for the soul." Though there are sporadic attempts at developing subsistence economies and new movements with dispersed fields of interest like feminists, ecologists and human right activists, "a clear picture of concerted actors determined to combat economic globalization is not yet to be found." Globalization with the spread of neo-liberal economies, easily available fictitious capital of credit, the use of electronic media and the enormous propaganda machine, is impacting on every society and reaching into the most remote and enclosed communities of the world." (pp.422-426).

What G.Schreijver has to offer in this situation is an alternative development program proposed by Giddens and a call to interculturality by Cardinal Ratzinger. Giddens's alternative program means working around globalization through involvement in self-help groups, damage limitation, making "life-political" questions central to liberation politics, stress on self-reliance and integrity, improving the position of women, autonomous health-care, sustaining family ties, and emphasizing responsibilities along with rights. (pp.67-69). Ratzinger's appeal first given in a talk at Hongkong (*Christ, Faith and the Challenge of Cultures*) is simple: Christianity with the highly developed Western technology represents the convergence of humankind toward a single community with a common life and destiny. "The diffusion of technological civilization is irrevocable and it is a romantic dream to want to preserve

pre-technological islands in the sea of humanity." Hence, inculturation that seeks to clothe the abstract essence of Christianity with cultural forms of tribal or Amerindian religiosity is erroneous, since these lower forms of religiosity in themselves lack instruments of theological reflection, and sooner or later they will be overcome by the secularizing influence of western technologies. With regard to the advanced religions of Asia, which have seriously questioned the materialistic world view that western technology is circulating can open themselves to dialogue with the universality of Christian faith." (pp.74-76).

The papers presented by Liberation theologians strongly react to the positions taken by the discussion paper. The symposium rejected the idea that there is a paradigm shift in LT, since in the move from socio-economic focus to the socio-cultural perspective there is only an axial shift. As Maria Jose Rosado Nunez points out there was no paradigmatic rupture in liberation theology, namely abandonment of the forms of knowledge and their substitution with new forms. There was only a widening of approaches adding to the sociopolitical questions those of economics of plurality, cultural diversity and ecology. J.C.Scannone points out that leading liberation theologians were not reductionists, but were talking of integral liberation. D.Irrazzeval from Peru says that LT was not economics or sociology but theology, a systematic examination of the praxis of love in contexts of suffering and struggle for life of the Two-Thirds World, of all those people excluded from the centers of power and knowledge, common people on the borders between life and death becoming participants in the process of understanding the Christian mystery.

L. Magesa from Tanzania states that the effects of modernity and post-modernity are seen in a different light by the victims and sufferers in the South. He quotes the words of Aylward Shorter that Christianity had very little to say about African Traditional Religion in the serious judgment of value. African experience since slave-trading days is replete with politics as a struggle for power. "Every manifestation of our faith today in Africa takes place in a world of domination and injustice. Solidarity with the poor and the exploited in our societies will constitute the true manifestation of the Christian faith." According to J.M.Ela from Canada, Vatican II will be known as the last council of the West that was forced to take note of

pluralism in the different domains of Christian life, in all matters which did not affect Christian faith and the good of the whole community. Even Peter's ministry of presiding in love should be re-thought so that he be the visible centre of catholicity that protects the legitimate diversities. P.Casperz from Sri Lanka states that it is not liberation theologians, but Pope John Paul II who promoted the paradigm shift from justice to culture, because culture is a nebulous idea while talk about justice has to be direct with no holds barred. In the First World the shift to post-modernity is an occasion to take a critical look at the results of modernity over the past four centuries, while in the Third World neither modernity nor post-modernity is of much interest because it never experienced the former. It had no self-existence in the eyes of the First-World for whose sake alone it existed. The move from dependency to independence is for it a repetition of the Exodus experience and the experience of the return from the Exile, both central themes of the Old Testament.

Card. Ratzinger's is surely an arrogant reaffirmation of the colonialist missionary mentality and programme: Christianity is a culture which with its reflexive modernity offers its cultural achievements to enrich other religions! He is repeating Schliermacher's theory that the scope of missionary activity is to preach not the simple Gospel but rather Western civilization as a concrete expression of the Gospel. He seems to ignore the fact that Western civilization in its present form with its Eurocentrism, rank materialism, sense of superiority of the white Caucasian and the claim to impose its will on the rest of the world is incompatible with the Christian culture clearly seen in the New Testament and the whole Patristic tradition. Inculturation is not clothing an "abstract Christianity" with the pre-reflective culture of other religions. Its scope is to affirm that the incarnation of the Son of God as Jesus of Nazareth belongs to the same cultural and aesthetic continuum with other religions in the one common divine plan of salvation for all God's children, and it is the common heritage of all humans along with Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and other religions. Ratzinger's "interculturality" assumes that the different religions are competing parallel economies of salvation. Identifying Christianity with Western civilization is a self-defeating missiology, since colonialism in any form today produces

only revulsion in all peoples. Even science and technology are culturally conditioned and they will be accepted and adopted only according to the cultural genius of each country.

As L.Magesa points out, the so called unreflective attitude of Africans is a reaction to the European manipulative and bureaucratic rationalism. Its fundamentalism and Pentecostalism are a rejection of rationality as the West conceives it and an acceptance of the 'divine order'. The same unquestioned acceptance of the holy without the support of reason is at the root of the founding of the numerous indigenous churches. The rampant corruption and civic irresponsibility also should be seen as a rejection of western notions of order and efficiency, though this blind rejection unwittingly ends in gross injustice to many people. Left to their own tradition the African self-understanding has sufficient checks and balances to serve a holistic conception of human life and society.

In short what the symposium and the book presenting its papers clearly show is that the First-World Christianity has no understanding of the Two-Thirds World. The problems for which Liberation Theology sought an adequate solution in the light of the Gospel still remain.

John B. Chethimattam

George Rajmohan, *Speaking across Boundaries, A Theoretical Study on Intercultural Relationship focusing on the Communication Theory of Habermas*, Trivandrum: Carmel International Publishing House, 1998, pp.ix,304

This is a doctoral thesis done at the University of Innsbruck. It studies the communication theory of Jurgen Habermas as a basis to inquire into problems concerning international relations, and within nations cultural and ethnic relationships. Though Habermas belongs to the Frankfurt Marxist school of critical thinking he tried to gather the result of research in various human sciences. Using the speech act theory developed by John L. Austin and John R. Searle he claims to ascertain universally valid truths and values for the future of

humanity. Reacting against the purely negative approach of Post-Modernists, Habermas makes ample use of the communication theory of American Pragmatists like Charles Sanders Peirce and George Herbert Mead and adopts the system theory of Talcott Parsons. In dealing with societies increasingly caught up in social systems and getting alienated from the life-world the communicative action theory of Habermas tries to bring harmony between the systems and the life world.

Starting with Habermas's critique of modernity and an overview of the evolutionary perspective of rationality the author studies the contribution of the Frankfurt school and of Max Weber in the critique of modern society and Habermas's own criticism of post-modernity as presented by Heidegger, Derrida and others. Taking a phenomenological approach to language relationships Habermas has shown that getting to know another human being is the final result of a conversation. We are a conversation and the mystery of language is revealed in our conversation. All conversations take place in language and language mediates the history of a people and opens the door to the future. It is through language that all our understanding occurs, of the world, of others and of ourselves.

According to Habermas there is a common structure of languages enabling translation and interpretation among languages. Languages possess a common as well as a common pragmatic structure. Only when the rationality structures of languages are systematically exposed and explained and when the universal conditions of speech are established irrespective of all language differences will we be able to cross the boundaries erected by cultural differences. So giving up the orthodox Marxist path Habermas takes a leap into the linguistic path of post-modern times. The inherent teleological orientation of language leads to an argumentative level bringing to full fruition truth, truthfulness and rightness. "The discussion of morality and ethical life, theory and practice, art and life, all center around the idea of a non-reified everyday communicative practice, a form of life with structures of an *undistorted* intersubjectivity" (p.243). East and West must collaborate and the United Nations should be strengthened. The practical intent of Universal Pragmatics

is a serious socio-political project to be realized for humanity on the basis of the conditions of free speech. The criticism of the author of this Habermasian Language Pragmatics is that claims of truth and untruth in communication in any language are dependent on its ontological suppositions and the sincerity of the speaker. "A speech act analysis which is not related to the intentional aspects of our communication can only become a lame theoretical undertaking in linguistics. "(p.258)

John B.Chethimattam

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